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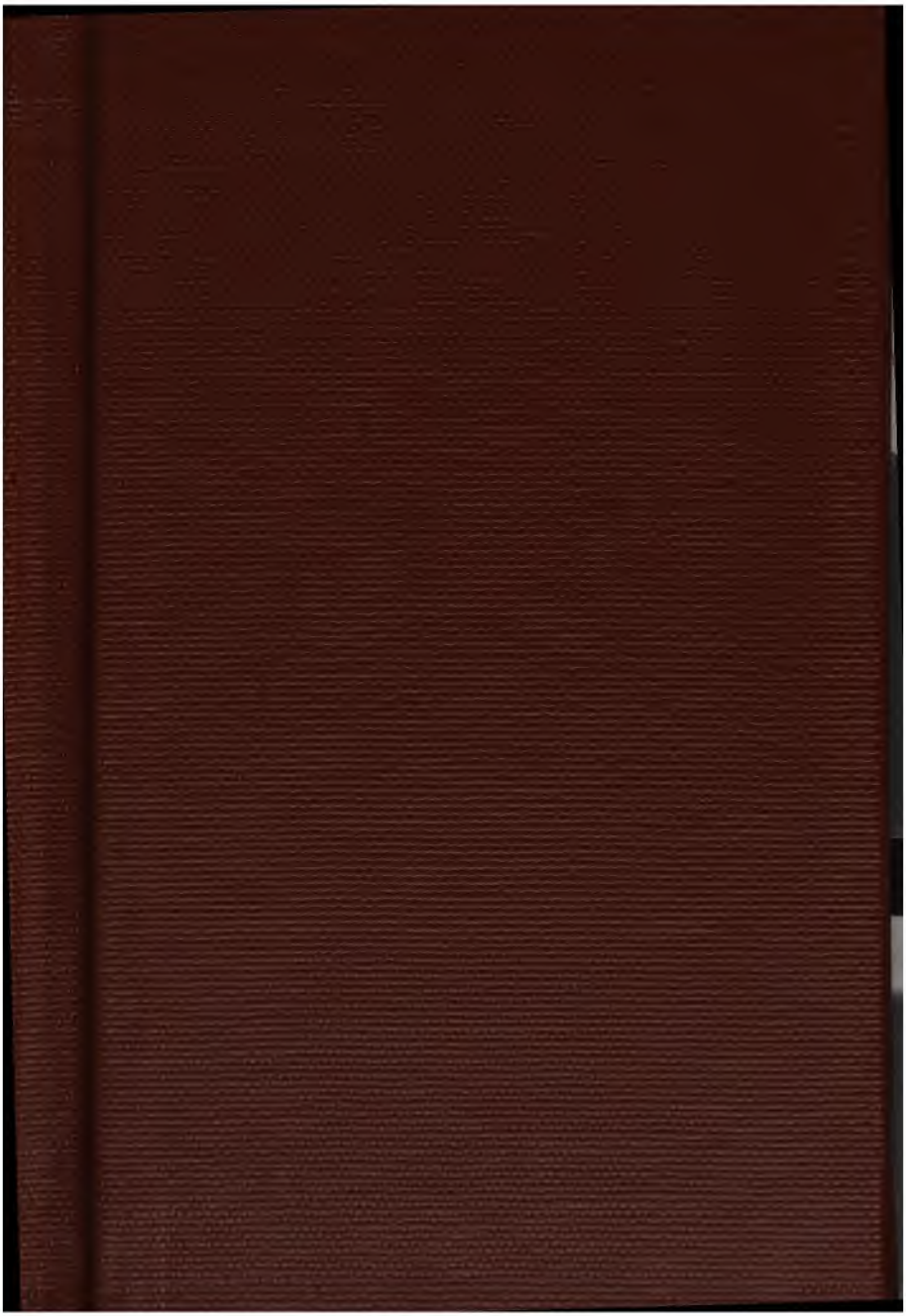

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DICK TURPIN

THE

WILD TRIBES

OF

LONDON.

BY

WATTS PHILLIPS.

'We sit in a cloud and sing like pictured angels,
And say the world runs smooth, while right below
Welters the black, fermenting heap of life
On which our state is built."

KINGSLEY.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
WARD AND LOCK, 158, FLEET STREET.

1855.

LONDON:
PETTER AND GALPIN, PRINTERS, PLAYHOUSE YARD, BLACKFRIARS,
ADJOINING THE "TIMES" OFFICE.

PREFACE.

It has often been said that one-half the world is ignorant as to the manner in which the other half lives. Firmly believing in the truth of this, the writer of the following Sketches determined to add something to the stock of knowledge he already possessed upon the subject; and, under efficient guidance, pay a few visits to the districts inhabited by those strange and neglected races designated as the Wild Tribes of London.

The resolution taken, he lost no time in carrying it into effect. A "friend" was soon forthcoming, who kindly consented to lend his valuable assistance in this search after information, and undertook, "for a consideration," to act as guide through the labyrinth of poverty and vice, which, rapidly extending, threatens—and more than threatens—the healthy life of London.

A certain amount of information gained, the writer resolved, like his "friend," for a "consideration," to present the public *with the first* fruits of his labours. He also *had a mission*—*don't* start! no writer of the

dare put pen to paper without one. The mission he proposed to himself was to assist in forcing upon the public mind the necessity for *educating* the poor; to prove the fallacy of rearing a boy in vice, and then punishing the man for a "propensity to crime;" to prove in the words of a divine dear to the writer's heart, that there are ways and means of bringing a wandering sheep back to the fold besides worrying him to death.

"Umph! this, then, is your preface?"

Another word, and it is done. While these Sketches were in progress, their author was accused of an attempted imitation of a thoroughly inimitable style, viz.—that of Mr. Charles Dickens. To such accusation he has but one reply, that where the admiration is sincere, it is but natural that, in a young author's first book, an unconscious imitation may follow, as a child with untried feet doubts its power to walk alone, and clings gratefully to the garments of the full-grown man.

W. P.

Eldon Road, Kensington.

THE WILD TRIBES OF LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Doubtless when the halting devil of Le Sage undertook to show the wonders of Madrid to his new acquaintance, it was from no higher purpose than might arise from a feeling of vanity on his own part, and of gratitude to his deliverer; his comments, too, upon the houses and their inmates were generally of the scoffing and Mephistophelian sort, such as might have been expected from the somewhat jocular and exceedingly cynical friend of the respectable Don Cleophas; but it is with a far different aim that we prepare for our wanderings among the dwellings of the poor, for our journey among the savage denizens of that vast tract that encircles our civilisation like a belt; prepare to seek out and enter those miserable homes where "Fear and Indignation" sit by fireless hearths; where Hunger, gaunt and wolf-like, is ever at hand, a ready tempter at the poor man's board; where crouch two dragons, ever on the watch, monsters before whose aspect the cheek turns white, and the stoutest heart recoils; who, weak and puny at their birth, have grown strong and terrible with age, for the hands that should have killed have petted and fondled them into unwholesome life. "Who are they?" you ask. Their very sponsors tremble when they breathe their names. But gaze around, and in the desolation you beh[illegible] the effect, and learn the guilt of nourishing into [illegible] those twin dragons—Ignorance and Crime.

"*But where would* you take us to?" asks Ind[illegible] *a yawn; "to what* part of the world are you g[illegible]

far: to yon swarming alley, for instance, crowded with ruffian men and vice-steeped creatures that "were women once"—an ant-hill in all but the industry—where human beings starve by hundreds, and lodging-house keepers reap fortunes, fattening, like the vermin they resemble, on the rags and wretchedness of their miserable tenants—where the Pariah children of the very poor—the little lepers, cast aside as hopeless, sit outside the gates of civilisation, and with out-stretched hands and strange, half-savage cries, implore the pity of the passers-by—and men, gentlemen abounding in broad-cloth respectability, pass these courts daily; but they see nothing, hear nothing—or, if they see, they mutter, "hopeless, hopeless!" and, taking their coat-skirts under their arm, walk swiftly away to breakfast or to dine. Indolence thinks that it is "all well enough," but imagines the lodging-house keepers to be "hardly dealt by." Indeed! then let Indolence listen to a writer who has evidently seen much of the Wild Tribes of whom he speaks:—"The tenant of the noblest mansion in London pays a far lower nightly rent for the space he occupies, and the cubic feet of air he breathes, than does the miserable urchin who pays his two or three pence for permission to stow himself under the bed of a low lodging-house, filled to suffocation by the most abandoned of all ages—one of the twenty or thirty inmates of a space not large enough for the right accommodation of more than two or three." "If," continues the same writer, "if it be desirable to pollute the rising generation, to sink them below the possibility of recovery, then, let the low lodging-houses and wretched single rooms and cellars be continued—they are as full of children as they are of disease and sin." "Always the same tale," lisps Belgravia, whose philanthropy is ever of the "telescopic" sort, and who can see no misery nearer home than Carolina or New Orleans—"ever the same tale, disease, disease, disease. Well, there are hospitals; we pay well to them, and—it's no affair of ours." But—and you will pardon us—the affair comes somewhat nearer home to your lord or ladyship than either [illegible]ave yet imagined. One thing is certain enough, and [illegible]elgravia to take it into her calculations—it is, that [illegible] *pestilence is* no respecter of persons; and the [illegible]*at to-day has* made a "slovenly, unhandsome

corpse" of poor Pat, the labourer, to-morrow may strike into genteel nothingness the most aristocratic of lords. "No affair of yours!" Oh, Sir, or Madam! the fiend you smile at, whose existence you deny, or whose power you deride, though born perhaps in a London alley, has ambition nevertheless—will creep into your splendid home, and remain there, till, his task accomplished, he retires slowly to his lair, casting many a leer of strange significance on the funereal hatchment that hangs, a sad memorial of his ghastly presence, outside your stately walls. "Then is no one safe?" Alas! no; a coronet is no defence, and even the "strawberry-leaves" have paled ere now before the venom of his deadly breath. Your cheek whitens at the thought, and your heart (not to be touched otherwise) grows sick with fear. "But where are these hotbeds of fever that you speak of—these nurseries of pestilence and crime?" We will presume that we are standing at your lordship's door (for, with an equal presumption, we will assume you to belong to the "better order" of human clay); you have just uttered a rational question (by no means a usual thing with your lordship), and, startled by the fact, we break through the magic circle of etiquette which has hitherto protected your sacred person, and, laying our hand upon your arm with gentle violence, urge your lordship onwards—say some fifty yards to the left, and then, with an equal decision, the same number to the right. We have quitted the square in which your mansion stands, and—but pause, and use your eyes. Where are we? what a narrow, very narrow, and filthy street; every house a ruin, every door unhinged, every window broken, or rendered useless by the accumulation of a century of dirt—everything speaks of misery and neglect; nothing is cheerful, nothing gives life to this rotting corpse of a street, not even the fragments of many-coloured bills, venerable "posters" that hang slowly rotting from the dank and slimy walls. The street is a ruin, made so more by neglect than time. Your lordship has many ruins on your vast estates—gray old ruins, beautiful in their decay, that still seem to rejoice in the balmy air and bright sunshine, for Nature, ever kind, has hidden their scars beneath a mantle of ivy, and crowned their *trembling heads with* coronets of flowers—ruins that add *beauty to the smiling* landscape, and around whose

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is not only looked upon with a jealous eye, but is attended with no slight danger to the impertinent intruder. However, we having been allowed, through the intercession of our "friend," to form an exception to this somewhat general rule, we shall proceed, of course, to betray the confidence placed in us, and give some particulars about this "caravanserai," which rejoices in the euphonious title of the "Blue Dog," and is used as a house of call by—those who are permitted to frequent it.

Turning into Baldwin's-gardens, and from thence into a whole labyrinth of courts, we arrive at a low dilapidated public-house, over whose sinister-looking front the hand of Time, in places such as these ever thickly encrusted with dirt, has passed heavily enough, partially obliterating the owner's (a former one's) name, and totally removing all vestiges of a curious hieroglyphic that once did duty as a representation of that canine wonder, the "Blue Dog." The entrance is low and narrow, and guarded by a surly Cerberus, whose one head is sufficiently frightful to compensate him for his deficiency in the other two enjoyed by his classical namesake. Either side of the doorway are two windows, whose dirty and cobwebbed panes are rendered still more opaque by curtains of a dingy red, through whose folds a light glimmers faintly —a dull, red, unpleasant-looking light—that makes the windows take a blinking and evil aspect, as they peer out, like two bloodshot eyes, into the darkness of the street. Entering the doorway, we present our credentials, and are ushered through a dark passage into the "back-parlour" of the establishment. The room is long, the ceiling low, and the floor rotten and full of holes, that seemed to be made to afford means for entrance and egress to a whole colony of rats, who, from time immemorial, have led a life of reckless jollity among the walls and rafters of the tumble-down old house; a miserable-looking fire is vainly struggling to preserve an existence beneath the crushing effect of a large kettle, which an old crone has just thrust down upon it, and is now bending over with a vain hope that it will, at some time, boil. At one side of the room, facing the door as you enter, are seated three cadgers, who bear about them, in their carefully-fashioned rags and ingenious wretchedness, certain signs of their *"ancient" calling*, and in the money scattered upon the

beer-stained table unmistakable signs of its profitable nature. They are playing cards with a blear-eyed, large-headed, cunning-looking man, who, a small tradesman in the neighbourhood, and a close friend of the landlord's, has used the "Blue Dog" for years; that worthy having allowed him the privilege of picking up whatever money might remain in the pockets of its frequenters, if such a thing were possible, after they had passed through his experienced fingers. This man is looked upon in such places as a necessary evil, and tolerated accordingly. Like a fungus, he has been bred and nourished by the rottenness and corruption around. Far different is the respect paid by this miscellaneous mob of vagrants, thieves, costermongers, what not, who throng the room, to that pale thin man, who, attired in an old brown coat, buttoned to the throat, generally crawls in among them as the clock strikes ten, sits in a corner, smoking a short pipe, and carefully perusing an old newspaper, holding but little intercourse with the company around; and yet, in a society such as this, where the morals are as ragged as the clothes, ignorance does homage to mind,—the man has had "an education," and the "scholard" is a power in the room. They place implicit belief in him, consulting him on all points when "in trouble," and looking up to him as one of a superior order, who has somehow entered their circle without falling to their level. There is a mystery about him which none of them can pierce; for he has been wise enough to keep to himself the reason of his fall, refusing to own the freemasonry of Vice, or to admit the brotherhood of Crime.

In the centre of the room a woman sits reading in a low, monotonous voice, from a tattered news-sheet, an account of a "recent hanging" somewhere "down in the country." We look around at her audience, and in the glistening eyes and eager expressions of approval of the "pluck" shown by the hero of the day, learn the utility of this literature of the gibbet, and judge its effect upon the debased, because uneducated, poor.

A rough-looking man, in a light hat and coat of velveteen, is talking earnestly to the "scholard," who has laid down his paper, and is penning an epistle on some paper stretched upon his knee. The penmanship is good, the paper soiled with tobacco and stained with beer; yet it will find its way into the

hands of "my lady," and be welcomed in Belgravia. And the cause? there it is—with long silken ears and sparkling eyes—peeping from the pocket of the dog-stealer.

The landlord has just entered the room: he is a coarse, hard-featured man, with a large cotton nightcap drawn over, or partly over, a forest of red hair. He has but lately risen from his bed, as his appearance testifies; for, like the owl, he slumbers in the day to be the more wakeful of a night. This man is what, in the language of his fraternity, is termed a "returned lag," or convict, who, tired of that pleasant land of "convicts and kangaroos," Australia, has returned, to become the proprietor of the "Blue Dog," and to reap the rich reward that always waits on merit.

While we are thus engaged looking round the room, reflecting upon its motley contents, and waiting the arrival of our "official friend," under whose care and guidance we are to make many journeys among the Wild Tribes of London; the landlord, who, quite overcome by the talismanic name of the friend in question, has become a miracle of politeness—suddenly introduces us to a new comer—"There, gen'l'men," pointing to a pale, slight-made young man, of emaciated appearance, who, clad in a loose pilot coat, is leaning carelessly against a table; "there, gen'l'men, there's a young man as is summat in your line, writes and draws no end o' things, is a reg'lar tip-topper, I can tell yer. Cos why? he hasn't got no ekal, as I knows on, in the purfession." Again we glance at the individual thus eulogised, while our host of the "Blue Dog" continues, "That's Tom, the salmon-chalker, as does them drawrings in the street, and a precious lot o' money he makes by 'em: and this is 'ow he does it: Tom knows all the pavements in London, makes his picturs in the morning, rents 'em to the knowingest cadgers as works 'em in the day, and then goes an' rubs 'em out at night." "Has he no rivals?" we venture to ask. "Of course he has, lots! but they arn't no good; and Tom wouldn't give a lesson at no price, and so keeps at the top o' the purfession."—Here the Blue Dog broke off abruptly, as the door opened, and the burly figure of our "friend" appeared; obeying his beckoning finger we follow him from the room, though not before we have taken another survey of the great lithographic artist of the London streets—the unrivalled and exclusive pavement *chalker*.

CHAPTER III.

RATCLIFFE-HIGHWAY.

Splash—dash—down comes the rain!—Whir! and the wind, rejoicing in its strength, comes tearing round the street-corners, snatching the hats from the heads of elderly gentlemen, wresting umbrellas from the hands of aged ladies, and otherwise distressing those passengers who are unfortunate enough to be abroad in a storm like this. The scene is Tower-hill. Women and children come straggling along the slippery pavement; horses sink slowly on their sides or knees, amid the greasy mud, and, having sunk, make fruitless endeavours to rise, incited thereto by a shower of blows and a storm of curses from their brutal and irate masters. The road is one dreary expanse of black mud, in which the reflection of the gas-lamps show deep down as in a river—while the bright lights of the shops cast long, wavering shadows across the streets, or multiply themselves a hundred times on the surface of the reeking pavement. Cabs dash by hurriedly, their drivers, so many piles of clothes, glistening with wet; the water pouring from their shining hats, beneath whose brim the bowl of a forbidden pipe often protrudes, glowing like a spark of rebellion in the very face of authority. Omnibuses rumble heavily along, crammed to suffocation inside, with a thick steam covering their windows. The conductors hang in sullen silence behind, indifferent to shouts, threats, and entreaties of those who hail them from the road. The drivers whip their steaming horses, and, speaking thickly beneath their many mufflers, dilate upon the "badness of the times" to any solitary and dripping traveller who, for some unaccountable reason, has selected a seat outside. The cab-stand is deserted, excepting by one solitary cab, upon whose roof the rain is falling in torrents, and with a noise which makes the wretched horse, as he stands among a layer of dirty straw, with the wind combing his ragged hair, tremble in the shafts, and shake his dripping ears with impatience. The waterman, too, is there—his title for once appropriate.

he goes clattering about in his heavy shoes, vanishing at intervals into the jaws of the neighbouring "public," to emerge again with an eye of increased moisture, and a nose of a yet deeper red. Here we stumble against three Mosaic Arabs, who, walking briskly along, are indifferent alike to wind and rain. Their steps are directed homewards, their "pargains" safely packed in the bags upon their shoulders, and a "good day's work" is written in the sharp smile which sits upon each sallow face. A wretched-looking boy who has been hovering about us, advances stealthily in our rear, catches "our friend's" eye, and darts quickly away. Crowds of young girls, through whose thin garments the wild wind pierces, grasping, with chilly fingers, their meagre forms, hurry by—girls, on whose white faces the raindrops fall like tears on marble. They are the white-slaves of the slop-seller, each journeying to her cheerless home. Progressing onwards, we reach the Mint. The soldier on guard has retired into his sentry-box, there to count the time for his "relief," and indulge in dreams of the canteen's charms, and the guard-room's cheering fire. Behind the sentry-box a miserable child lies coiled, seeking a shelter from the driving rain. No cheering prospect—no dreams for him! His gaze is glassy with hunger, and the face as vacant as the mind; he is scarcely more human than yon famine-stricken dog, who is tearing at some fragment of offal that he has found in a neighbouring gutter. The boy knows but one fear, and crouches closer as the policeman lounges past. Whir! the wind rushes round upon him; splash! the rain comes down with as little pity—as though they were human, too, and knew the world's appraisement of the naked wretch they battered!

To our right lies the Tower, rising black and dismal, scarcely to be distinguished from the murky atmosphere around; but we hear the wind howling and moaning about its time-stained towers, as though it bore upon its blasts the spirits of the many victims who have found a dungeon and a grave within its gloomy walls. Still further on, huge warehouses uprear themselves—warehouses piled with the products of a world—within whose walls, though we see them not, are supplies for all the necessities and luxuries of life; *without whose walls*, within their very shadow, crawl, visible

enough, hundreds of wretches "wild with want," craving for charity, praying for bread. Clatter—clatter on the pavement—splash—dash against the walls comes the rain! Families in snug parlours draw closer round the fire, and, with warmth and comfort nestling at their hearths, listen to the pattering on the window-frames, and smile at the fury of the rain. Other families, such as this tattered vagrant's, who, with meagre wife and squalid children, walks the wet streets this night, think differently, and, scowling upwards at the gloomy sky, they curse the pitiless rain.

Oh! St. Katherine's Docks. The lines of warehouses are vanishing from our view. Another scene is unfolding itself. Let us cross the muddy river that flows along the street. We do so, and find ourselves in Ratcliffe-highway.

Ratcliffe-highway—and Ratcliffe-highway by night! the head-quarters of unbridled vice and drunken violence—of all that is dirty, disorderly, and debased. Splash, dash, down comes the rain; but it must fall a deluge indeed to wash away even a portion of the filth to be found in this detestable place. Like a drab, it lies side by side with the river, who holds it in a foul embrace, kissing its rottenness with slimy lips, and receiving into its broad bosom a portion of the corruption it contains.

In another paper it is our intention to describe the aspect of Ratcliffe-highway by day; our present business is with it by night—a journey taken in the rain, to see something of the wild life it contains. Everything here, like the shops we have described in the Old Mint, has a character of its own—all the shopkeepers have but one object, but one endeavour—viz., to attract the eye of the sailor, and inveigle him within their doors. "Man," it has been said, "is a dupeable animal;" and "that there is scarcely one who may not, like the trout, be taken by tickling." This may or may not be true as regards the generality of mankind: but there can be little doubt of its truth when applied to "poor Jack." He cannot move a step along the pavement without stumbling upon some magnificent attraction—some man-trap placed there for his especial behoof—some quaint device or "artful dodge" calculated to turn his silly head with wonder and delight—to draw the money from his capacious and ever-opening pocket. Here, now, is a bushy-whiskered, broad-chested fellow, with

a face like a piece of elaborate carving in the very darkest mahogany; he is caught in a moment—that watch in the window has done his business. Twice has he essayed to pass the shop, but in vain; and he now stands eyeing the trinket with a look of comic irresolution. The watch is of large, nay, vast proportions, and, with undeniable utility, combines much that is ornamental in the shape of a gorgeous, pictorial, and moral adornment—a ship in full sail, a stormy sea, and the motto, "Such is Life," making to the sailor's eye a pleasing allegory. There is a card attached to this treasure, setting forth other and more hidden virtues; it is as good as a chronometer; is jewelled in no end of holes; is engine-turned, and to be sold, as a matter of philanthropy, for merely the price of the silver-casing. Still irresolute, Jack half turns away; when the shopkeeper—a hawk-visaged Jew, who had his eye upon him from the first—puts forth his hand and removes the trinket from the window. It is enough—Jack hastily enters the shop, soon to emerge triumphant with his purchase. Ah! Jack, there are few dangers in thy adventurous life so hard to avoid as those that here encompass thee at every step. New rum was bad enough, but the old rum sold here is worse. Doctored porter and "jigger gin" will kill body and brain faster than arrack punch or sangaree; and though the sharks of Port Royal have keen eyes and sharp teeth, they are but novices in their trade compared to these—the sharks of Ratcliffe-highway!

It is strange Jack's fondness for large watches—watches of pantomime dimensions—watches such as Gargantua might have used, whose manufacture Gulliver might have witnessed in the thriving kingdom of Brobdignag—watches similar to the one of which a legend exists, that its owner having late one night wound it up with the bed-key, it was found going the next morning as well as ever, the treatment having by no means disturbed its internal arrangements; or to another, of equal celebrity, whose proprietor could never wind it up at all when on shore, the operation disturbing the entire house in which he resided.

What is this? A dram-shop, rendered doubly attractive by sundry pictorial embellishments of sailors dancing hornpipes—sailors carousing with their sweethearts; a sailor with *a huge punchbowl* before him, crammed with guineas, and

labelled "Prize-money!" which he is supposed to have brought home to his "Molly,"—an exceedingly flighty-looking young woman, who might be very capable of making his grog, but never of washing his trowsers. Beneath these cartoons are sundry announcements; such as "Grand Concert held here every evening, admission 2d.;" "Le petit Elisa and le belle Pauline on the tight-rope" (the French of Ratcliffe-highway being decidedly French without a master); "Mr. Darley will dance a hornpipe;" and "the celebrated Mr. Towler, as the Maniac!" There is a very spirited drawing of Mr. Towler, in this, his favourite character, representing that gentleman in a thick and much-dishevelled head of hair, large staring eyes, and a suit of clothes in so dilapidated a condition that none but a maniac would have thought them worth putting on at all. He holds several yards of chain in his hands, and is glancing fiercely at a plump young lady dancing in a distant corridor, and who is evidently the cause of Mr. Towler's great internal and external disarrangement.

Round the door of this temple of harmony—which, despite the weather, is filling rapidly—are grouped sailors of all kinds, and women of but one; here are mariners from every part of the globe—the negro from the Gold Coast; the lithe, active, tiger-cat Malay, with his voluble utterance, rapid gesticulation, and bright treacherous eyes; rough, weather-beaten men from the Arctic Seas; bronzed, hirsute fellows from the far Pacific Islands, or the burning coasts of Africa; ill-conditioned, careless-looking rascals from the American liners, who ask no questions, but man their vessels with refuse of all kinds,—"the scurf of the earth," growls an old sailor, who has been impatiently surveying a group of these noisy-rioters.

Shall we enter? No, not yet; "our friend" has another house in view, and so we proceed till we arrive at the commencement of New Gravel-lane. "All this is coming down," we are informed, and we utter a thanksgiving for the news as we pass down the lane, and glance at the dens of infamy—at the men and women with which these dens are peopled. "These are all sailors' lodging-houses." We glance at the right and left, and shudder: the "little cherub" must indeed keep a bright look out, who, in places such as these, "watches over the life

of poor Jack." The women—look, here is one, a terrible sight to see—a drunken, screaming maniac, the wretched wreck of a woman, clinging to a post, and with hoarse, loud utterance, challenging the sailors as they pass, demanding "gin." Let her have it, in Pity's name—let her have oblivion at any price.

We reach the bridge in New Gravel-lane, and gaze over into the inky water below—stagnant enough—disturbed only by the falling rain. This place is dismal at all times; but on a night like this, and with such a scene around, mournful and gloomy beyond expression. "Many a desperate wretch has hurled herself over here," remarks our friend; "in the slang of the neighbourhood this is known as the Bloody Bridge, and many a poor devil who has escaped the dangers of wind and wave has found a miserable grave in these sluggish waters." We retrace our steps, and again come upon that screaming woman; she is staggering heavily along, hurling out a defiance to the world, and threatening "this blessed night to give somebody a walloping." Don't smile, reader, but reflect. Just now we passed a child—one of many born and bred in this horrible place; now a girl, leaning on a sailor's arm, passes us, and, laughing loudly, takes to the road to avoid the infuriated drunkard on the pavement. Laughing loudly! yet that girl was once as the child, and will be—with a certainty dreadful to contemplate—another such a woman as this gin-debased wretch you see. And the end—have you not seen that stagnant-looking water? that bridge with the ill-omened name? Is it not a conclusion fitting enough to a life commenced in Ratcliffe-highway?

"Now, gentlemen," and our friend halts before a door, "we will enter, if you please;" and enter we do, prepared to see something more of "life among the sailors."

CHAPTER IV.

A GLITTERING feature in Ratcliffe-highway—among whose squalidness it shows like some gay-coloured patch upon a beggar's dirty garment—is the East London Music Hall; a name given to a thriving tavern, which, facing New Gravel-

lane, does a most profitable business with the peculiar population in its neighbourhood.

The East London Music Hall is to the Wild Tribes of Ratcliffe-highway what the Opera House is to the tamer tribes of Belgravia. In the one, aristocratic Tom seeks and finds an agreeable lounge, shakes off *ennui* for a time, and

"— with loudest peals
Applauds the fool who highest lifts his heels."

In the other, plebeian Jack takes his ease, behaving himself much in the same manner as his aristocratic brother Tom—with a little less languor perhaps, but with quite as keen an appreciation of the fare set before him.

The East London Music Hall is—but our readers shall enter with us, and judge for themselves. We pass the bar; and after exchanging a few words with the proprietor, a person of comely looks and gentlemanly bearing, ascend the stairs, pausing only on our way up to glance through a window into a large room below, crowded with men and women, smoking, drinking, laughing, and quarrelling. Then a few more stairs—and we stand at the portal of the Music Hall itself, through which a stream of human beings are pouring; for the entertainments announced in the bills bear more than the usual promise; and in Music Halls—East London ones, at least—these promises are pretty faithfully fulfilled.

The Hall is large, and tolerably lofty. At one end is the stage, with a tastefully ornamented proscenium; at the other a kind of gallery, in which those visitors who please can assert an extra respectability by the disbursement of twopence more than the usual price for admission—the animal being elevated into a superior position immediately upon the payment of that sum; a title to respectability being a question of money at the East as well as the West end of London.

We, however, took our seats in the body of the hall for several reasons; one of them, of course, being our great contempt for any position obtained by the debasing means aforesaid—a contempt wonderfully strengthened in most people by the total absence of the requisite funds to set up a little despotism of their own.

The room is well lighted by a handsome chandelier, "which came from the Crystal Palace," we are rather needlessly informed; for that peculiar collection of a world's curiosities seems to have furnished everybody with everything, from a lighthouse to a lemon-squeezer. The walls are decorated with much taste,—gorgeous panelling, with medallions containing neatly executed copies of some of the *creations of* Kenny Meadows's most poetical of pencils.

But, alas! where are the old friends that should have *greeted us on our entrance?* What can make up for the

absence of those adornments to be found in every other abode of harmony in Ratcliffe-highway? What has become of the "Parting" and the "Return Home?" We miss that young lady, who, waving a good-sized tablecloth to a distant ship, in which her lover is supposed to be, stands, like Ariadne, "a-weeping" on the shore. We miss her, as, half-mad with joy, she comes bounding down the beach to welcome her Theseus, who has returned with a money-bag of a dimension that would make even the heart of a successful gold-digger grow sick with envy.

We miss, too, our old friend the "Ship on Fire," which, to judge from its endless repetition, must have been a blaze of triumph to the ingenious artist. Where, too, is "The Storm," with that one unhappy sailor so dear to our childhood, whose checked shirt will for ever be graven on our memory; but whose legs no human being yet has seen? Is he still clinging to his mast in that lonely sea? Where is the Nile, Trafalgar, Copenhagen, or the dolphins which the artist, with much knowledge of the changeable nature of that peculiar fish, used to paint in every colour which his palette could supply? And Echo answers, Where? Prospero and dainty Ariel, Ferdinand and sweet Miranda now adorn these walls; appropriately, perhaps, but not much to the taste of Jack, who speaks contemptuously of the "old buffer with a beard," and slightingly of the young lady "in the white chemee."

"Horder 'ere!" and order reigns throughout the room; the "manager" whispers our friend, and we look deferentially towards a distant corner, from whence the voice proceeds. "Horder 'ere!" Yes, there he stands, "the monarch of all he surveys"—

> "—The front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command."

We bow our heads before the potentate of the place, and do homage to the Lumley of the room.

"Our friend" volunteers an introduction; tremblingly we accede. Our fears, however, are quickly dispelled—Lumley is condescending and polite; nay, more; unbends and proffers a cigar. "Horder 'ere!"—the manager vanishes mysteriously behind *a door near the proscenium*: a bell is heard—he reappears, and the "entertainments" now commence.

A storm of applause welcomes the appearance of a favourite performer. His first words convulse Jack with laughter; he is "the funny man," and his every gesture is the signal for a roar. Poor devil! his wretched, miserable face shows painfully through the paint that encrusts it, and the paleness of the day's misery mocks the nightly rouge. "He's been a clown," whispers Lumley; "a regular good'un too, till he broke his leg." A clown! we could have sworn it; there is no mistaking the harsh tones of the voice, the roll of the eye, the distortion of the mouth at every word he utters—he is singing a comic song. Heaven help thee, poor wretch! thy stoicism must be great indeed. The Spartan boy wore a smile upon his face while the wolf was tearing at his vitals; a fiercer wolf is gnawing at thine—hunger—a wolf never absent from thy home, where a sickly wife, with hectic flushings on her sallow cheek, and three pale children, with faces chalked by want, depend on thee for bread. "Ri tol de riddle lol"—the song is at an end. "Brayvo!" Once more the audience roar their loud applause, and the manager is content. A merry song—well sung; give the singer water to wash the colour from his face, and—here is money—give him drink to wash the care from his heart.

The band! oh, the band! We are introduced; exchange nods with the first, and last, fiddle—there is but one—and shake the piano by the hand. Taking advantage of a pause in the performance, we enter into conversation. The piano—who is the leader, for the fiddle follows modestly in his wake—pronounces his life a "hard one;" "had an ear for music once—not such music as this though;" and his thin fingers strike some chords—discords—while he speaks. "Poor? of course he is." "Children? of course he has—children and poverty always come together—a dispensation of Providence, he supposes." Soothing the irate musician, who is evidently of a choleric turn, and, like the instrument he plays upon, out of harmony with the world, we turn to his companion. "He don't depend upon his fiddle, not he"—we rejoice at the intelligence; "bad look-out if he did"—we think so; "scraping a living he calls it, and—" "Horder 'ere!" breaks in the autocrat of the room; and the performance again commences.

Commences, and with it the band—the piano, coughing

and wheezing, plods heavily along — while the Cremona comes painfully in the rear, startling the "vexed air" with shrill screams and dismal moans, as the relentless hand of the master wields the bow, and drags a discord from its quivering strings.

A young lady now advances—a song and a sentimental one,—Jack is all attention. The words are Dibdin's, and they go home to the sailor's heart. The girl sings with feeling, and, for the place, well; the rough natures of the men seem softened beneath the charm of her voice, and at the conclusion of her song, a perfect hurricane of applause ensues, putting even the voice of Lumley at defiance. Jack gazes with feelings of mingled awe and admiration upon the dazzling creature in pink ribbons and pearly muslin, as, curtseying gracefully, she leaves the stage; and when far, far away, those words are sung by rough voices in the forecastle, he will think of thee, beauteous maiden, and thy dulcet notes—think of thee, perhaps, in the lonely night-watch; or, when lying awake in his hammock, he, too, hums the tune, while he listens to the dashing of the restless sea, he will think of thee as Rosina Douglas, a seraph, in pink ribbons and pearly muslin; never as Miss Rebecca Moss, with draggled robes and dirty shawl, with unlaced boots, and stockings ill to see; or as Becky Moss, who, with fork in hand—that trident of power—turns the savoury fish, in oceans of bubbling oil, while the elder Moss sits placidly by, watching, with twinkling eyes, the labours of his offspring. Alas! poor Jack. And yet, most sensible of readers, have you never harboured in your heart of hearts the image of a Becky Moss, under the garb of a Rosina Douglas?

"Horder 'ere!" — order for the prima donna, a tall scraggy woman, with the remains of a fine voice, "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh," which she pours through a long wiry throat, through lips, on which there ever sits a "crooked smile." She bows patronisingly to the audience, and glances nervously at us. Our appearance is, on the whole, respectable—we are evidently gentlemen disguised —can it be that the young nobleman who has been so long "a-coming" has come at last?—or, and her heart beats high with hope, is a real manager present—the genuine thing, of which Lumley is the miserable sham? Such things have

been; "our friend" is portly, and—well, siren-like, she will do her best, and win our hearts with a song. "Oh, I should like to marry;" she distends her throat, and quavers out her tuneful wish. Poor prima donna!—Madame Bettina Sulvyne, in the romance of the bills; Betsy Sullivan, in the reality of thy prosaic life—the nobleman has not yet come who will bear thee away to his halls in the distant West—the manager is not yet born, who, charmed with thy bulbul notes, will lay his cheque-book at thy feet; those feet, one of which, rude Jack, sea-bear that he is, has just now displaced so roughly, when he lit his extinguished pipe to the foot-lights on the stage. But heavens! Is it possible? Can Madame Bettina Sulvyne drink beer? She can, and will. A hand is stretched across the foot-lights—the goblet is received—she raises high the polished pewter, bows gracefully over its glittering surface, and then her face is lost in the foam of its contents. Betsy Sullivan, farewell!—rejoice in Lumley's smile, or tremble beneath Lumley's frown—thy lot is a hard one, but there are harder yet. Pipe forth thy tuneful lays; pipe on, and be content.

Another comic song, from an elderly gentleman in a flaxen wig, with a broad, red face, and projecting eyes; then a hornpipe, danced by a pair of very dirty white trowsers; then comes the prima donna, who, still with an eye to our portly friend, loses herself in screaming something "in the Grisi style," as the manager informs us in our ear; then we have Rosina Douglas again, with another of Dibdin's songs, to which the heart of Jack beats time; and then—then we turn our back upon the stage, and survey the company the Hall contains.

The men are principally sailors, young and old; boys, with the down scarce showing on their chins, yet loud in oath and big with swaggering talk, drinking fierce liquors with women whose vice-hardened faces show strangely beside their own. Able seamen, fine, jolly-looking tars, smoking and drinking too; but, deaf to the noise around, they listen intently to the songs. Old men—ancient mariners—with grizzled heads, and whiskers streaked with frost, who smoke lazily and drink deeply; who seem indifferent to all things, and sit watching the thin smoke as it wreaths upwards from *their pipes*. Negroes are here in plenty, laughing and

chattering the loudest in the room. One, a Hercules in ebony, is warmly expressing his love of England and hatred of New York. Matthews's Yankee denied the existence of liberty in a land where a man "couldn't flog his own nigger;" Sambo, here, claims the title for our land on other grounds: "This no lan' o' liberty?—spec it is. D—n New Yark! Here, black man lick a white man. Spec I lick two."

As we continue our inspection, our eye rests upon a couple seated in a corner of the gallery; we had noticed them before, and a strangely assorted pair they seemed, even for Ratcliffe-highway. The one was a young man, of singularly dissipated appearance, maudlin drunk, applauding vociferously the songs, and expressing loudly his approbation of the singers; his head resting heavily upon the shoulder of the girl, his companion, who sat "silent as a stone," her glassy eyes fixed and expressionless, her face pale and rigid; for, be the joke what it might, she never laughed, nor did a smile even for a moment rest upon her lips. There she sat, a strange contrast to the noisy drunkard by her side.

A coarse-featured girl, one of the wildest of the Wild Tribes around, notices the object of our gaze, and volunteers some information: "That's the Lady Jane; a nice 'un she is, I don't think. She used to work slops for old Melchizedek, the Jew; but when her mother was ill, she popped the duds, and got three months for it. Sarve her right, says I. No one will employ my lady now, and so she does as we do." And, with a horrid laugh, the one girl glances up triumphantly at the other, as a demon might turn in his fiery bed to gaze upon some angel freshly fallen from the purity of heaven. There is the difference of some five years in the ages of the two, the hardened woman at our side being the elder. Will five years work this change in the poor wretch, whose glassy stare is even now before us? No! there is a refuge yet—the grave; and the hand of death is even now at work, tracing his name in those bright threads that lie so redly on her cheeks.

"Pardon me, we are about to close," murmurs a perfect Chesterfield of a waiter, whose Grandisonian airs are amusing enough in such a place. We take the hint, however; and, anticipating the rising of the audience, bid Lumley and Costa adieu, and once more sally forth into the muddy streets.

rarity), and unwashed face, who leaning towards the roof, addresses the gasping occupant as follows: "Why don't you give it up? You haven't got no wind, old boy." "No more would you," is the gruff reply, "if you'd been using your bellows all day long as I have." Ah! a light dawns upon us. We thought the face was familiar. In sunshine, rain, hail, and snow have we seen it, thou itinerant Orpheus of the London streets, whose Eurydice, a sharp-visaged virago, the terror of her alley, is now busy darning thy well-worn hose, and cuffing the squalling children who populate thy home. "My stomach is as full of wind as a drum, and will not improve by beating," cries the starving clown in the old play. "Then give him a trumpet," laughs the captain, "and let him turn his agony into music." Let Eurydice take in thy coat an inch or two, poor Orpheus, till it clasp yet closer thy meagre form; then take heart, man, and blow thy merriest tunes, while the mummers in the ring go round.

Shall we take a private box? We do so by the unceremonious process of climbing into it. The box is nothing more than its name conveys, being rudely fashioned of some few boards, covered by an ancient stuff that once was red. But scarcely have we, with much self-congratulation, taken possession of our creaking seats, than we are astonished by the appearance of the proprietor, who is by our side with an almost pantomimic celerity. Words are not needed; there is an eagerness in the eye, a grasping clutch about the outstretched hand, that reminds us—but for the lowness of the demand—of a pew-opener, in a fashionable church. We pay our pennies, and are left at peace, with the proud consciousness that we are having our money's worth, and are looked upon as "swells" by an admiring audience.

Master Halfonso has finished his hornpipe, and is now engaged darting through some blazing hoops "like a salamander," as the doorkeeper had promised us—and like a very cautious salamander, too; for, as if to illustrate the old adage that "a burnt child dreads the fire," Master Halfonso wisely postpones each leap until the flames have reduced themselves into a thin circle of light, scarcely enough to form a halo for the brows of any of the "respectable" saints whose names are immortalised in the Romish Calendar. Then follows dreary attempt at leaping over some poles, which is brought

through whose darkness the lightning flashes; brooding brows, and long black hair—a Spaniard! There is no mistaking him; he is but a common seaman, yet he walks the pavement with the step of a hidalgo. He is as great a rogue as Guzman d'Alfarache himself; is as mean a scamp as Lazarillo—that Proteus of vagabonds; would pick the pocket of the companion whose bed he shares; would gamble away, were it possible, the soul that is in him; yet would pawn his earrings to buy masses for the repose of his mother's—and would, moreover, with "hasty knife" slash into ribbons the doublet of flesh that encompasses you, gentle reader, did you reflect for a moment upon that sun-baked land he calls his country.

Next comes a large-eyed, coal-black mariner, with limbs like an Ajax; his head erect, his white teeth glittering as he talks. He is fresh from the continent of Africa. A ribbon encircles his neck, and hangs partly concealed beneath his red shirt, low down upon his brawny chest. It holds his "charm," his "Fetish;" and beneath its mighty power the negro's heart beats happy and content. By his side, in curious contrast, with every muscle of the face in motion, keeping time as it were, and illustrating his rapid yet musical utterance, walks another—an Italian sailor, from Naples. He, too, wears a ribbon round his neck—a ribbon to which is attached a little leaden image of his guardian Saint; he looks upon dusky Ajax with scorn, and, with the image of lead lying cold upon his heart, pities the benighted heathen at his side.

While they talk, another figure passes, and eyes them both with contempt—a grim figure, tall and lithe, with features hidden beneath a mask—a perfect network of tattooing; his eyes flash scornfully as the African exhibits his charm to the Italian, who laughs in mockery at the sight—flash scornfully, for *he* knows what the true faith should be. He is a Sandwich Islander, and carries his god in his pocket—a wooden little deity of home manufacture, who must be upon his good behaviour, lest he be split up into pipe-lights on the morrow. They walk briskly along, these three idolators, with a very heathen-like contempt for each other—each ready to die for the faith he professes; yet, let the sharp thong of the boatswain's whip touch with blistering kiss th-

forecastle yarn he heard his comrade's voice sink to a whisper from excess of fear, as he murmured the name of Blackbeard the Pirate. Then the black flag was a flag of power;—but those "dogs have had their day," and men no longer hurry by Execution Dock, their hearts turning to water at the clinking of the chains, as half a score of pirates shake and rattle in the rough night wind. No, the seas are safe—the great Highway is free: but are there no other pirates, Jack?—no other foes as deadly to thee as yonder shark, who has fol-

lowed your ship for miles, and whose white teeth close with an expectant snap at every careless movement of thy restless limbs? Is Ezekiel Brown, of Gravel-lane, more merciful than Henry Morgan? Was Jack Avery more rapacious in his dealings with thy fellows on the broad Highway of nations, than Aminidab is to thee in this narrow Highway of Ratcliffe? Alas, poor Jack! great sea-gull mocking at storms, confident in the strength of thy wings, skimming merrily over the waves, as in a heaven of safety and delight! there are dangers you know not of—shoals on which your bark will founder, yea, of which no chart shall speak—places where Aminidabs in plenty sit watching, patiently watching, the "changing of the wind."

Ratcliffe-highway can boast shops of all kinds,—shops that purchase of, as well as from, Jack. Here is the shop of a naturalist, as full of parrots as a tropical forest; full of birds of all kinds and every plumage, from the pretty little wax-bill, or the sunny canary with its melodious note, to the more showy bishop-bird—so appropriately named, who, better housed, better fed, and higher-priced, utters no note to speak of, to redeem his keep. "They're the fashion, sir," says Mr. Jamrach, the proprietor; "but they'll pass away." Again we look upon the useless bishop-birds, and devoutly hope they will. Numerous shells adorn these shop-windows —shells resting on a bed of moss; some large enough to have cradled a sleeping Venus; others, horn-like and twisted in their shape, like those through which the Tritons blew their songs of welcome to Neptune's bright-haired queen; shells, pleasing to look upon, whose rosy-lipped loveliness takes the thought far away, till we forget the filth and misery around. Here, too, we find a bonnet-shop,—a sight rather unexpected in Ratcliffe-highway; where the young ladies of the East, in point of fashion, have outdone the ladies of the West, the latter having still retained a vestige of what the former have long since discarded—keeping no other covering for their heads than that with which Nature has adorned them.

But, speaking of shops, we must not omit some mention of one certainly peculiar in its appearance, and totally distinct from the many which surround it. It is a dingy, sinister-looking shop, at the corner of Ship-alley, bearing the ambitious name of the "British and Foreign Medicine Institution;" and its proprietor, a tall, white-haired man, clad in a loose-coloured dressing-gown, such as Nicholas Flamel or Cornelius Agrippa might have worn without loss of reputation, rejoices in the rather ominous title of Dr. Graves. Our business, however, is with the window and its collection of horrors, before which Jack stands aghast, his bronzed face changing to the pallor of ashes. Wax models of terrible diseases, "rarely to be met with," says the card attached. We think so too—very rarely, and only then, we trust, in the nightmare-like imagination of Dr. Graves himself. Bottled babbies in plenty; children with two heads—who, if we are to believe in the assertion that "two are better than one," must have been invaluable to their parents. Here is a small

appointed in love, I believe. But, should you like to see Tom, gen'l'men?—if so, you're welcome behind the scenes—though it ain't every one who has that privilege."

Gladly we accept his offer, and impatiently sit out the remainder of the performance. There is a "succession of novelties;" but we disregard them, and rejoice at the rising of the audience. "All over!" "Clear out!" The sea of faces, hitherto calm enough, at once breaks up into billows of excitement; the doors yawn, and a torrent of villainy and folly finds its way into the street. We resign ourselves to the guidance of the proprietor; and, in the hope of making the acquaintance of Tom Baron and his talented family, venture behind the scenes of the Royal Circus in Ratcliffe-highway.

CHAPTER VII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

As we follow the proprietor of the Circus down the trembling stairs that groan beneath our tread,—as we pass slowly across the arena, our feet sinking at every step deep into the mouldy sawdust of the ring, our thoughts go back to another time than the present,—a time when the writer of these pages was younger—certainly much younger in heart than now—when "behind the scenes" had a magic in its sound,—carried with it a spell irresistible to the ear of youth; when to have a friend who "knew an actor," was only to be surpassed by knowing an actor one's self. Shall we, can we ever forget our sensations, when, in company with Snarl, the great theatrical critic, we entered that famous tavern which bears a Welchman's harp for its sign, and found ourselves face to face with Growl—Octavius Growl, of Drury-lane? Can we forget how Snarl greeted him, and grasped his hand with a warmth to us unaccountable—unaccountable, because in Snarl's breast pocket, "near his heart," as he himself had facetiously said, rested the "slashing critique" for the morrow's paper, which was to bring the angry flush upon poor Growl's sallow cheek, and make that rough voice tremble with other than stage emotion as he reads it to the meek-eyed little actress who bears his name, and presides over that

temple of disorder, an actor's home? "How are you Growl, old boy?—doing well, I hope?—have some beer." From that moment, we disliked Snarl, and by a rapid effort of memory reckoned up the many "small sums" he owed us; felt vindictive, and with reluctance paid for his drink. Nor were our feelings changed, even when late at night we saw the great critic to his home, when the portal closed upon his staggering form, and we were left alone with Growl. It was then we made the friendship of that melancholy man, and only parted with him at our door, when (having with that absence of mind peculiar to genius, left his purse at home, he deplored the necessity of borrowing a trifle for "his cab") we parted with a promise to meet the next evening, when he would introduce us "behind the scenes."

Behind the scenes! those realms of romance—that *terra incognita* to the play-going world. Oh, that night! how shall we describe it?—how shall we depict those mingled feelings of awe and pride that possessed us as we passed through a curious crowd and *entered* the stage door?—that mysterious portal where we had so often waited for the appearance of the fairy or nymph, whose beaming eyes had drawn the heart clean out of us, and how, ever failing to recognise her in that sharp-visaged young lady in a faded shawl, who came so briskly out and trudged down the street, careless of the driving rain—an Ondine only in her indifference to water—we wondered why she never, never came. How when we were fairly in, we wished ourselves fairly out again; and yet, how, getting into everybody's way, we lounged about, putting a mask of impertinent assurance over a heart trembling with modest fear. How we dared only to glance into the Green Room; yet that glance was enough, the disappointment has lasted us till now—dirt and discomfort made the more apparent by an attempt at ornament—a feeble endeavour, as it were, to gild the gingerbread, to hide with soiled trappings the miserable reality of the player's life. The scales fell from our eyes in a moment, and many a lesson of life was taught us by that hurried glance.

Then the great actors—stars of the night—how they strutted the boards of their little domain, with more than a monarch's scorn for the smaller luminaries who revolved around them! Where are the figures we so much admired?

a pigeon-house without a bottom, several second-hand boots (odd ones), a filter without a tap, a basket of carpenter's tools, a stuffed parrot, and three flat-irons.

Again we pause, as the voice of temptation meets our ears. The voice is soft; the tones subdued, as though its owner were overwhelmed with the greatness of his subject. There is music in those lisping accents, as it bids us turn and speak. What! can this be the author of that Hebrew melody?—this withered mummy, with toothless gums, and nose and chin in dangerous propinquity? A pair of dark rimmed spectacles sits astride of a nose which stands boldly out, like the prow of a Roman galley; and a dirty nightcap, of uncertain colour, is pulled over a perfect conflagration of red hair. With one fleshless finger the Horror beckons us. We would fain retreat, but "he holds us with his glittering eye," and "we cannot choose but hear." He catches us by the sleeve, draws us within his doorway, and whispers the word "Cigars"—"direct from the 'Avannah. My dear, vouldn't deceive you for the vorld. Got a friend as ships 'em." "Grows them." Abraham, "grows them." The Minories are near at hand, and lettuce leaves are cheap; your cigars are brown, and youth is green. So the Havannah supply never fails in Petticoat-lane, where trade goes briskly on.

As we turn our backs upon the spectre, who we leave shaking the elf-locks which hang flaming about his parchment visage, our notice is attracted to a face of a different caste, —a countenance glorious to look upon,—a head wild and noble, such as the shepherd prophet Amos might have borne upon his shoulders; and when we look at the large eye, beautiful in its liquid brightness, the dark hair, and beard loosely flowing, we are reminded of those heroes of the Bible, half-madmen, all poets, who drank in inspiration from the wilderness around them, and from the stars that shone down upon them, as they sat tending their flocks. Men undaunted, standing erect in the presence of their kings, denouncing vice and prophesying ruin. We are reminded of all this as we gaze upon the head before us; but, alas! the owner looks up, speaks, and the spell has vanished. He is busily engaged picking to pieces the silk of some old umbrellas, to "make his vife a dress," as a passing Israelite closely remarks.

Among the groups that now crowd the Lane, several figures arrest our attention, both from peculiarity of aspect and strangeness of apparel. This old man, with a face of a bilious-golden hue, with a cunning eye and restless avaricious mouth, as though thirsting for the Crœsus drink of gold, is clad in a dingy robe, fastened round the waist by a twisted shawl. He is a pearl-merchant, from Ceylon, and walks slowly along, combing a beard of saffron hue, with nails that curve inwards like the talons of an eagle. He pauses only to haggle with a boy for one of those sticky and unpleasant-looking cakes, which he carries in a tray before him, and which seem manufactured only for the purpose of catching vagrant flies. Here, also, are merchants from Smyrna and Constantinople, dealers from Hamburgh, Frankfort, and a host of towns beside; two Russian Jews from Siberia, and one shrivelled little monkey-faced Hebrew from Morocco. They are speaking in languages of all kinds; but to us, whose acquirements are limited in that respect, their gestures are more eloquent than words; and we look with wonder upon men who have travelled from all corners of the earth to trade, and trade in Petticoat-lane.

Let us pass down Harrow-alley, leading to the City Clothes Exchange,—that great emporium, of which more anon, when we speak of the links which connect Petticoat-lane with the WILD TRIBES OF LONDON. Harrow-alley is the Lane over again—smaller, and, if possible, dirtier than her neighbour. Bestriding the path, like a greasy Colossus, leaning against the wall, or squatting in the mud, are men and women by the score. Beside, behind, and before them, are spread out their miscellaneous wares, to which they supplicate your notice or imperatively demand your attention. Here is a man, selling female apparel, and dilating upon the qualities of a faded silk; there a Jewess, with a face imagination would bestow upon the Witch of Endor, sitting coiled up amid a pile of old iron, expatiating upon the excellence of a hand-saw and jack-plane, which a semi-drunken carpenter is dreamily investigating, and making a hopeless endeavour to cheapen. The curb is covered with women's boots, looking jauntily enough, while myriads of Wellingtons and ankle-jacks, of clumsy make and ancient date, are very properly deposited in the kennel.

The various public-houses in Petticoat-lane, Harrow-alley, and elsewhere, are generally crammed to excess. Through the open doorways we look into the back rooms, where some dozen men are always smoking,—their faces lost in the clouds of smoke which emanate from their lips. These men are known to the initiated as Petticoat-lane fencers, or receivers of stolen goods. Patiently they sit in these filthy rooms, waiting news from their scouts, who they throw out as antennæ to "feel the way;" or for the appearance of the thief's confederate, who "gives the office," and tells where the booty may be found. The Jew asks no questions, makes his "pargain," and in a few hours the articles themselves have ceased to exist—or, rather, have been born again in a form that their original fashioner would refuse to own them.

CHAPTER IX.

PETTICOAT-LANE—OLD CLOTHES.

THE old clothesmen of the London-streets may be found about Petticoat-lane to a man—either with huge bags, filled to bursting, proceeding towards the great Exchange in the neighbourhood, or with the same bag twisted round his arm, gossiping with a friend upon the day's adventure. A strange race are these old clothesmen; and a certain air of shabby-second-hand mystery hangs about them and their trade

"Ole clo'! ole clo'!" Stealthily the Jew seems to glide along the street—his bag filling quickly, yet by a process hard at first to discover; so cautiously does he conduct his movements, so delicate is he in managing the pride of his summoner.

"Ole clo'! ole clo'!". A form, half-concealed by a curtain, appears at a window, and looks timidly into the street; a finger is hastily raised, and then the figure as hastily retires. It is enough; the Jew saunters across the road, glances with apparent carelessness around, and slips quietly into the house, of which the door is conveniently ajar, and the whole business is managed with that secrecy so greatly ired by penurious but highly respectable householders.

"Lots of histories wrapt up in these old clothes," remarks our official friend, as seized by a sudden philosophic turn, he halts in the centre of Harrow-alley, and waves his hand comprehensively around. "Lots of histories, truly!" comes like an echo from ourselves, as we also come to a halt, and, with much curiosity, examine the strange scene which presents itself to our gaze. The shops are crammed, and the roadway covered, with articles of clothing in every degree of shabbiness—in every stage of decay. You peer into the dark recesses of the shops, and, rising to the roofs, bulging from cupboards, weighing down shelves, hanging from walls, and littering the floors, are old clothes—nothing but old clothes. "Lots of histories, truly!" The brocade, that at one time might have decorated the form of a duchess, is here vended by the Jewess, to be purchased by the drab. The broadcloth, which has clad the portly form of the merchant, the Pharisee of trade, who, proudly conscious of his utter respectability, has commented upon its texture and surface, oblivious of the ragged jacket and corduroys of his childhood, is here exposed for sale, and—oh, profanation!—may soon become the property of the poor broken-down hack who sweeps out the merchant's office. The clothes which were yesterday my lord's, to-day are his lackey's; and to-morrow will be—here. Surely there is equality enough in the old clothesman's bag to satisfy even the wildest of democrats! The coat of my lord is here compelled to suffer the companionship of his valet's, and both shudder with genteel abhorrence at the profane touch of the dingy velveteen that Moses' saffron hand has just crammed down upon them. The bag filled, it travels eastwards, and its contents, with those of many thousand others, go to swell these heaps of old clothes which stagnate for awhile in Petticoat-lane and its neighbourhood. Stagnate, but not for long: in your Hebrew's hands, few things rest that lose by keeping. This vast sea of old clothes, which, from its numerous tributaries, is continually increasing, overflows at stated times, and scatters its gathered riches over the world. Ireland is partly clothed from this great Clothes Exchange: the Irish dealers being ever on the spot, ready to "trade" to any amount, and, being "known men," have the pick of th market. Poor Ireland! her very rags the cast-off clothin

of her sister, England. Norah, sweetly improvident, weds herself to hunger and a husband—her wedding-gown a faded relic of Belgravia, which, passing through Petticoat-lane, has found its way to Donnybrook; while Paddy buttons round his ague-shaken form the remains of a coat that once encased the body of poor Paddy's master—a famous absentee landlord.

To America ship-loads of old clothes are consigned,—"chiefly for the Irish," says our informant; rags and wretchedness pursuing them even across the waves, and forcing themselves upon them as they sit crouching, seeking a shelter in a distant land.

The Wild Tribes of London find in Petticoat-lane and Ragfair outfitters in plenty, who, without the show or shameless puff of their great competitor and his worthy son, whose Mart is the "feature of the neighbourhood," rival that illustrious family in the cheapness of their prices, and surpass them in the quality of their goods.

This coat, now dangling at Levi's door, once belonged to a cabinet minister. Stare not! Cabinet ministers are but men, and a coat may not be the only link that binds them to the lower grade of humanity,—such as this which circulates in Petticoat-lane. Yes, this heavy-looking overcoat,—we repeat it with all due solemnity—once encircled the form of a cabinet minister! In its comfortable embrace he has slumbered, when borne swiftly along on his road to Osborne or Windsor, the music of the last new opera still ringing in his ears, and a vision of the ballet dancing gaily through his brain; while deep down in the recesses of this breast-pocket, which now gapes so invitingly open, lay the "destinies of Europe" done up carefully with red tape—a bundle of papers, nothing more! Yet on authority slight as these papers contain, may the wolf cross the stream that separates it from the lamb, and Bruin steal the honey uninjured by the bees.

This statesman is a man great in the kingdom of chicane, with a face deceptive as Talleyrand's, a policy crooked as Machiavelli's. Suppose a nation's honour attacked, a kingdom ravaged, and its independence destroyed,—he will answer indignation with a laugh, an accuser by a *bon mot*, and reply to invective with a jest.

But we are forgetting the coat, which, as it didn't admit

f turning, has been thrown off by the master, and, through he valet, has travelled to the Jew. It is now an object of special attraction to a slim, active-looking fellow, who is nspecting its capabilities for wear. "Our friend" knows im, and he as evidently knows our friend. A nod of recog- ition is exchanged, and the inspection of the coat is leisurely enewed.

"That's Dick—Dick Abbot, of the Mint—Downy Dick, s we call him; and a knowing card he is, too; the best hand t a burglary of any in the trade. Many's the crack I've nown to be Dick's, but could never bring any home to him ut once; that was an affair down away in Kent. Lagged im then, and no mistake; slipped through my fingers after ll, though; getting only two years, where another would ave had his fourteen cut and dried for him. Ah! he's lippery as an eel, and harder to catch. Dick's got a head s long as your arm, and that's a fact." Our friend pauses, nd we look with increased interest upon this clever specimen f a successful rogue, and then at the coat he is now ngaged in cheapening, and fall a-thinking upon the difference f position between its first owner and this ruffian, perhaps ts last.

"Difference of position—only that?" Only that, gentle eader. Education and position might have made a cabinet inister of Downy Dick; and—our hand trembles while we race the sentence—the cabinet minister, deprived of both, night have been no better than the skilful housebreaker. queer world, my masters, is it not? where the coat that esterday was travelling towards the Queen's palace, to- norrow may be journeying a less pleasant road towards one of he Queen's prisons!

What have we here? A dress—a wedding dress; ashioned daintily enough, though, from its present shabbi- ess, it must have seen many a change of fortune, besides he strange chance which has deposited it here. We can ancy the maker of that dress, bending, poor girl, with red yes and tired fingers over her ill-paid toil. Does she think f her own wretched home—the cheerless garret she dignifies vith the name? Yes, to contrast it (for there is a touch of omance about the girl) with the splendour of the home of he fortunate wearer of this very dress; and while her busy

needle plies its unremitting task, she thinks of the fair girl whose graceful form this robe shall clasp,—of the bright eyes that will glance lovingly upon, and the tongues that will echo the praises of, the wearer. Then she muses upon her own hard lot, and the blinding tears come hot and fast, to be hastily brushed away, as, with a sigh, she dismisses her dream, and again resumes her work. A dream, indeed! The dress clasps the form of the bride; its folds fall about her, diamonds bedeck her bosom and sparkle in her hair, while—tear-drops glisten in her eyes.

Tear-drops?—are they never seen in a bride's eyes now a-day? Are they such rarities in Belgravia? By the bride's side sits her mother—a woman great in her way—humane, too, as an admiring public can testify,—has attended Uncle Tom meetings near a hundred, and signed Anti-Slavery addresses by the score. She has sold her daughter nevertheless—sold her for a title; traded away the happiness of her child for a coronet—that tinsel thing which so coldly glitters on her brow. There is a step on the stairs, a tottering and uncertain step. The mother looks up hastily. A frown, a few harsh words, and the daughter's face is as a stone; the eyes are red, perhaps, but the tears have disappeared. The doors open, and the bridegroom enters. This the bridegroom?—this man with palsied head and shaking limbs? Let us turn from the spectacle, and pity the well-dressed martyr by his side.

But Petticoat-lane! Oh, the dress is soon cast aside as a reminiscence neither needed nor sought for. The attentive Abigail who, to the second-hand airs adds the second-hand clothes of her mistress, becomes its possessor; from her it descends lower, and then lower still, till it bedecks the misery that trafficks in the streets, and then finds its way sure enough to Petticoat-lane. What will be its ultimate fate? Who knows? Will that brazen-looking woman, whose dirty face is streaked with filthy rouge, become its owner? or, will Betty housemaid call it hers, that she may wed young Pluck, the butcher's man, with whom she has been keeping company for ever so long, and whose red, round face, and jolly smile with which he greets you he polishes his countenance with the sleeves of his coat, or sleeks down his unctuous hair, bespeak him a good-tempered fellow, and argue well for the happiness of Betty? May the

dress find an owner in the housemaid; for, from the poor girl who fashioned it, the miserable child who first wore it, down to its present low proprietor, this wedding-dress has seen nothing but misery and tears! May it, therefore, ere it finds its grave in the old clothesman's bag, be folded over at least one warm and loving heart, though it be but Betty housemaid's, and her admirer nothing higher in the social scale than young Pluck, the butcher's man!

We are standing opposite to an old Jew, who is busily engaged devouring olives, which he abstracts with dirty finger and thumb from his waistcoat-pocket. His shop is a large one—a huge collection of old wardrobes. You gaze into its confusion with feelings of dismay and wonder; mountains of bonnets, pyramids of hats, forests of umbrellas, avenues of dresses, galleries of coats, a wilderness of blankets, and a chaos of shawls. "Where could they all have come from?" we mutter half aloud, as with outstretched neck we peer through the unglazed window.

"Some from von part, some from another," is the prompt reply of the intelligent Hebrew, as he returns a half-eaten olive to his pocket, while he answers our self-communicating interrogatory; "but they goes as fast as they comes. Those bonnets, now, are for Australy; with lots o' ribbins; they'll be all the go at the diggins. Them shawls and gownds are for Ireland and the country market; and them hats—"

Here our official friend interrupts with a laugh, and a remark that "They're small good, any how, 'xcept to burn 'em."

"Burn 'em!" and the eyes of Isaac distend with horror, and his beard bristles with indignation; "burn 'em! rubbish!—vy, bless yer, the old hats is vurked up till they're better than new, bright and shining, like a new pin—just the sort o' thing to captiwate young chaps, such as you,"—and he glances, with a knowing look, at the graceful gossamer which surmounts our head. "Vy, my dear, the sheap 'ouses, an' many of the others as vell, haven't such a thing as a new 'at in their shops, 'cepting, p'r'aps, in the vinders. Ah! we could let you sharp fellers into a wrinkle or two, if—" and here he removes an olive from his mouth to give vent to his mirth—"if it vere vurth our vile."

His laughter over, he continues. "Sold a pair of the Queen's vhite satin slippers yesterday. How did they come here? Vell, that's no odds; come they did, and many a fine lady's beside. Sold the whole lot to a actress; fashionable vun, too, as plays up there at Vinsor—acts before the Queen in her Majesty's own slippers. Funny idea, ain't it? Ah! ve makes the old lamps look like new vuns here, I can tell you. Many's the old coat that finds its vay back to the owner as sold it the veek afore, and whose eye has been caught by its beauty at the door of a sheap tailor's. Ve've lots o' mourning about this time, enough to fit out all London in grief for a tvelvemonth. There's a lot just come in," flinging the remains of an olive in the direction of a lugubrious-looking heap of clothing. "Poor families, you see, half ruin themselves to get them bits o' duds together, cos no grief ain't respectable vithout 'em; and so they pinches their pellies an' empties their pockets to hang themselves all round with crape like a veeping viller"—we are rather startled by the simile, but, forbearing to interrupt, he proceeds; "then, after a time, the family goes to the vurkus, an' the duds, in course, comes to us."

Here a curly-pated, pock-marked boy, with that sharp, precocious look never absent from the face of Hebrew youth, comes dashing up, and informs the shopkeeper that he is wanted in the market.

This suffices for Isaac. He turns his back upon us at once, determining to waste no more time in such unprofitable converse, and crowning himself with the first old hat that comes to hand, hurries down the lane in pursuit of what he is certain to overtake—his "pusiness."

CHAPTER X.

PETTICOAT-LANE—A "FENCE HOUSE."

Our "official friend" having made an appointment to meet an acquaintance at a public-house in the neighbourhood of the *Lane, proposes that* we should accompany him. We acqui*esce, and obediently follow* in his footsteps.

"The house we are going to," says our Mentor, as he splashes through the mud, flinging the words carelessly over his shoulder, "is a noted one among the 'fences;' there they pick up as much business in a day as at any other house in a week. A keen lot, there, I can tell you; always ready for a job. Only give them 'the office,' and they'll make things snug and comfortable in less than no time. I go there sometimes myself, when"—here he wheels half round, and winks at us facetiously—"when I've got a little business up; besides, the landlord's a friend of mine, one as I've known, on and off, this fourteen year." The term "friend" we remark to be somewhat frequent in the official's mouth, but generally with an accompaniment such as this: "What, Bates? Tom Bates? Bless you, an old friend of mine—know him as well as I do myself—had him in custody some seven years ago." Or, "Bill Simpson? Poor old Bill! we were great cronies once; nibbled him, though, in that affair of the stolen goods at Shadwell"—and so on; the speaker appearing, in his progress through life, to have grasped his friends—not by their hands, but their collars.

"Are there many receivers of stolen goods now?" we ask. 'Lots," is the curt reply, thrown, as before, over his shoulder. 'But we thought that the fence was a being almost extinct, and that the regular receiving, as a trade, was nearly done away with." Have we insulted our friend? We know not; but he halts abruptly, turns sharply round, and then, overcome by his feelings, leans for support against an adjacent wall, and gazes pityingly upon us. "Well, begging your pardon, if that's not about as foolish a remark as ever I heard. No fences! no receivers! Why, just walk down the Lane, take a turn about the neighbourhood—the alleys, courts, and all that, an' if I don't show you a dozen thieves to one fence, an' three fences to one honest man, call me a Dutchman. Bethnal-green lies over there," and, like the O'Mulligan, our guide points vaguely into the distance; "Spitalfields yonder, and Wentworth-street's close at hand—there are thieves on all sides of us. They do the work, but who gets the pull? Why, the Jews. And where do you find 'em? Here, of course—here, about Petticoat-lane." Having said thus much, *our friend wheels round* again, and with much complacency *pursues the uneven* tenor of his way.

The night is foggy, and the wet hangs in clustering dew-drops, or drips from our hair as we walk; the night is foggy, yet a brisk trade is still doing in the Lane and its neighbourhood. Lights show faintly in the shops, throwing a dim, uncertain light upon many things—chiefly upon the dirty faces of the owners, as they sit smoking among their merchandise, but failing to illumine the many recesses of their establishments, which, lost in a seemingly impenetrable darkness, lend a sinister and mysterious aspect to everything around. The banditti are still at their posts, lying in wait for you as you pass. One thrusts at us with an old saw, which, having lost its teeth from extreme old age, has assumed a formidable and sabre-like appearance, that we shudder to contemplate. Another pulls us within his doorway, and, unfolding several bandannas, of colours hard to distinguish in the sickly light and with the thick fog hanging about us, informs us, with winks and nods of much significance, that they are "very sheap." Escaping from this harpy, we stumble over a fat Jewess, who is busily engaged suckling an infant. We are confused, and stammer out an apology, but she never loses her presence of mind for a moment; snatching up a boot from a pile upon which she has been sitting—like a Suttee waiting for the fire—she dangles it before us, declaring that we shall have the pair for "eight and six." We, however, declare as positively that we will not, and quickly avoid Circe and her cries.

A man passes us, laden with hot peas, and on all sides finds ready purchasers. His cry of invitation is peculiar, though not elegant—"Now then, 'ere you are! 'Ot peas! 'Ot peas! Fill your bellies, and warm your 'ands—on'y a ha'penny!" and his can is quickly emptied by the Hebrew gourmands who surround him. But what is this?—this most delectable odour which assails us?—this bubbling, frizzling sound that meets our ears?—that makes the nostrils of Judah distend, the eyes of Israel dilate with joy, while the lips water with expectation?—Fried fish. A fish-shop throws its cheerful glare into the chilly night. We will halt for a moment, and inspect its interior,—one of many of a similar *character which abound* in the neighbourhood.

The first thing which arrests our attention, after having *casted our eyes upon* the rows of crisp brown fish that deco-

rate the window, is the large fire within, which has a fiercely-jolly look, like the face of a giant who has taken to drinking; but which comforts us nevertheless, till we forget this raw December night, which encompasses us about. The shop is tenanted by a family of five—a mother, her three daughters, and an only son, the heir to the house of Manasseh. The mother, though obese, is comely to look upon, with eyes of melting lustre, and nose, whose size, and lips, whose pulpy fulness, indicate her race. She stands by the fire, the presiding genius of the frying-pan, whose handle she holds firmly, as hardy mariner the good ship's helm. She grasps her fork like a harpoon, and, with steady eye, watches the sea of hissing, bubbling oil. Each moment the fork descends, and transfixes a fish, till one by one the rich brown spoil lies heaped up within the confines of the dish, while the frying-pan bubbles and hisses with impatience, calling loudly, like the horse-leech's daughters, for more. With a look which might become the mother of the Gracchi, Rachel stands among her children; only suspending her labours to use the fork as a weapon of offence upon the curly head of her ill-conducted offspring, Jacob, who, hovering about the fragrant heap, is ever ready to pounce upon the interdicted but too tempting morsels.

The elder daughter of the house stands near her mother, with the face and presence of her namesake, Judith. She is cutting the fish in slices, preparing them for their hot bath in the hissing pan; and we shiver as we hear the keen knife crash through the bone, and strike the table beneath; we shiver, for we are gazing into those large, dark, scornful eyes, and are thinking of the head of Holofernes. Leah, the second daughter, is carefully sewing some tinsel on an old satin slipper, and is singing a popular song to the interesting accompaniment of the frying-pan. She is the genius of her family, as a very dirty face and extremely slatternly appearance sufficiently testify. She is a "professional," being under an engagement at a neighbouring theatre, where she is suspended nightly, like the coffin of the Arabian prophet, between heaven and earth, as a fairy sylph or gnome, and thus increases the stock of half-crowns in the paternal coffers. *Sarah, the youngest* of the Hebrew Graces, is indulging in a *series of skirmishes* with the unruly Jacob, upon whom

much to that young martyr's disgust—she exercises a vigilant surveillance.

Hiss—bubble—bubble—goes the pan, as a fresh shoal of fish plunge into it; and—"Come along," says our friend, placing his hand, by force of habit, on our collar. We go along accordingly, though not without another look upon the shop and its contents. O, daughters of Judah, even Mr. Spooner will not deny that there is yet one triumph left you—ye fry fish well!

Mentor hurries us along, and we have no time to take more than a hasty glance at the various shops as we pass—though many are well worth inspection, being as quaint in their form, and as ancient in their aspect, as that shop where our old acquaintance, Wayland Smith, bought the famous drug, which worked such wonders in the fortunes of his master. One shop, in particular, attracted our notice, or rather, its inmate; for of the shop we could see little or nothing. Through an open doorway, about which a swarm of dirty children were clustering like fungi, we looked into a dismal sort of receptacle for lumber of all kinds, articles of old iron-work being predominant; and from that into another, or inner den, where an old man was seated, crouching over a book, which he was reading by the light of a smoky old lamp, with a dull red flame, and long ragged wick; the outer room or shop being in entire darkness. The light streamed full upon his white head and beard, which fell in masses on the book; the whole scene, with its strong light and shadows, made up a picture worth a minute's halt at least. To gain time we appeal to our guide.

"Noble old man that!" and we point to the object in question.

"Is he?" is all we get in reply.

"Fine chance for a Rembrandt to take him off now!"

"Could take him off whenever I please," says our friend; who, having his one idea, follows it up with much pertinacity.

"You might fancy him some old alchemist," we continue, "bending over a treatise of the great Albertus, or decyphering *the hieroglyphs of* Lully."

"*You might,*" observes Mentor, emphatically, at the same *time regarding us* with much anxiety of countenance.

"Some alchemist musing over his crucibles, melting down"—

"Ah! that's it," and his mind relieved, our friend is himself again. "Melting down's what did him up; we caught him at it, and he got his seven year for it; didn't cure the old fence though. He is one of the worst of 'em now. A regular old sinner is Ikey, with cunning enough for a hundred. Hilloh, Ikey! how are you, old boy?"

Mr. Isaacs looks up, and discloses a very wicked-looking face, all wrinkled up and puckered into squares, like a pattern for Berlin wool, and to which the white hair and beard seem scarcely to belong. He closes his book—a well-thumbed ledger—and approaches the door, where, after kicking spitefully at the children on the step, he greets our friend as an old acquaintance.

"How d'ye do, Misther? how d'ye do? Vant anythink in my vay? Ain't got nothin' in yourn, as I knows on." Here we laugh, and Methuselah turns upon us with the malignity of a cat. "Vant to sell the young gen'leman, p'r'aps?—been sold often enough before, I should think! Should like to puy him at my price, and sell him at his own. He! he! he! he!"

We stay to hear no more; our romance has fled, and we leave the ill-conditioned old Jew in disgust, his cackling laugh pursuing us round the corner; nor do we open our mouth again till we arrive at the door of the house we left "the Lane" to seek.

The fog is too thick for us to see much of its outward appearance, and so we plunge into the gaping passage at once. "Well, Cheesy, how's Mike?" says our guide, with much self-possession, as he stumbles over a figure squatted on the step, and which stumbles to its feet with some alacrity.

"Oh, vell enuf'; Mike's vell enough—he's dead!"

"Dead!"

"Died of the cholera last veek: that makes five on 'em in these parts."

"Never mind, Cheesy, my boy—never mind; matters aint so bad, as long as you can count 'em;" and he pushes merrily along.

"*That's a very* foolish remark of yours, my friend," we

mutter as we stumble slowly after him. Yet it is but an echo of an opinion in higher places. When the rain-drops fall so that we can number them with ease, it is the fool only who neglects to prepare for the coming storm.

We are in the midst of a large room, in which some twenty men are furiously smoking. The fog from without has entered with us, and, mixing with the smoke, hangs, curling and wreathing itself into fantastic shapes, above the heads of the smokers. Some of them seem prophetic enough. For instance, where it has wreathed itself into the form of a ring, or noose, which trembles above the head of that unprepossessing fellow by the table—how it descends, till it seems to play with the rough bristles of his hair, then, lightly sailing upwards, trembles loosely to and fro, swinging in mid-air! The man himself is ill at ease, for he glances uneasily around, and turns with a scowl at each opening of the door. "That chap's been up to something," our friend remarks, as he fills a pipe, "or he wouldn't sit so shifty in his chair—shouldn't wonder if we heard more of him to-morrow mornin'." Perceiving that his friend has not arrived, he, after handing us a pipe, proceeds to enlighten us concerning some of the people who form the "company" of the room.

"This, you see, is a fence-house; and those," indicating by a scarcely perceptible motion of the finger various countenances bearing the impress of their several degrees of villainy, "are what we call Petticoat-lane fencers; they're Jews, every one of them. You know the old saying, that there was never roguery yet but a Jew or a woman was at the bottom of it. The Jews are downy customers, I confess, and plaguey hard to catch."

"And the women?" we ask.

"Oh, the women! Bless you, if it wasn't for them we shouldn't catch half we do. There's not one among them all as doesn't sooner or later sell her man. As to honour among thieves, that's a regular lie!"—this with much emphasis. "*I* never knew them show any."

"But as regards the women, you are surely too severe," —*and we proceed to quote* numerous instances of self-denial *devotion.*

"Ah, I dare say; but they're all nobs. What I say is this, that where Poll or Sarah loves Tom, either Poll or Sarah will sell him sure enough when his time comes. Every woman has her weakness—jealousy, vanity, or what not. Their weak side's our strong one. We go in for that, and trusts to human natur."

Having delivered himself thus, our friend resumes his pipe, with the self-approval of a philanthropist, and the placidity of a philosopher.

"That," pointing to a little old man, warming his shrivelled hands by the fire, "that's Solomon Hart,—a regular Californy, they say. Ah, his father was the rummest old codger I ever knew. He'd read somewhere in the Scriptures that David was laid on a bed of gold. 'Now, that's my ambition,' says he; and he got it too; for though he died in a garret close by here, it was on a mattrass stuffed with suv'rins."

No easy bed to lie on, we should think. For ourselves, we would rather be the beggar crouching in lair of straw, than the miserable miser, palsied with fear, shaking upon his bed of gold.

A tall fellow, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his face ornamented with a beard of a week's growth, now enters the room. He sends a sharp glance round, and beckons to a distant corner. A thin visage peers out through the smoke, and answers the signal with a nod; then a queer-looking mummy of a man limps out from the obscurity, and joins the fellow, and together they leave the apartment. "That's a stroke of business for Lame Lipey; he's in luck to-night; that's his third job. Wonder what Ned's been up to; some of his pals have made a crack (burglary), no doubt. Here, Cheesy, give us some winkles." Cheesy shuffles across the floor, and deposits his basket on the table. "Well, Cheesy, has Frank been here to-night?" Cheesy replies, in a voice thickened by fog and odoriferous with drams, that "he hasn't seed him;" but while he is speaking the door opens, and the person inquired after enters and greets our friend.

He has come for business, and business is at once gone into. They are quickly enveloped in a cloud of smoke and mystery. The room begins to assume a still more vapour

look. One by one the faces of the company disappear in the fog, as the pipe drops from our hands, and we fall asleep in a corner; and so for the present we will shut our eyes and our mouths upon the doings of Petticoat-lane.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. GILES'S—A RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW.

In the year 1117 Maude, the "right loving and obedient" wife of Henry I.,—surnamed, for her many virtues, the Good,—founded an Hospital for Lepers upon the spot where now stands the district dedicated to St. Giles. This hospital, we are told, opened its doors to all those "suffering from the terrible disease," and there the poor outcast crawled, certain of a shelter—a place where he could hide himself from a world that looked upon him with fear and abhorrence, treating him as a being labouring under a fearful curse—as one bearing *upon him* a brand terrible as Cain's, that shut him out for *ever from intercourse* with his fellows.

Neighboured by tall trees, surrounded by green fields, it

seemed as though Nature, kinder than man, smiled upon the lazar-house; and the poor pariah no longer sought the darkness, but, with the refreshing breeze caressing his thin cheek—livid by excess of pain—raised his eyes to Heaven, and blessed the Giver of the sunshine that bathed his limbs with light, and rested like a glory upon his upturned brow. Yet the hospital was a place of dread to the dwellers in the city; and travellers would make a long detour to avoid its walls; or, if compelled to pass beneath their shadow, would mutter, with quivering lips, fragments of forgotten prayers, calling upon each saint in the calendar to guard them from an infection which shook each heart with fear.

The hospital passed away, but upon its site arose the church and village of St. Giles; and then the great city, stretching out its polypus' arms, seized upon the village, and, drawing it to her bosom, crushed out its healthy life in the powerful embrace.

The hospital has disappeared, but it has left its seal upon the spot, and lepers by the thousand crowd where the lazar-house has been—lepers, but no longer standing afar off, without the gates of cities, scattering dust upon their heads, and crying with a loud voice, "Have mercy on us!" to the passers by. But, herding together, they throw aside the garment that hides their shame, and rejoice in the leprosy of ignorance and sin which isolates them from their kind—a leprosy never absent from places such as these, the head-quarters of indigence and filth—a leprosy which incrusts from head to heel the inhabitants of this quondam village of St. Giles.

Look upon it from what side we will, the picture this place presents has ever been a dark one. From an early date the gallows—the only teacher granted to the children of St. Giles—has thrown its shadow on the spot; but the Wild Tribes defied its terrors, and laughed at the monitor which raised its head in the very centre of this seed-field of crime. They grew familiar with that tree whose branches then were ever laden with fruit, and danced around its blackened timbers, quaintly named the Maypoles of St. Giles.

Smithfield was promoted into a Golgotha of a more excited kind; and the progress of truth was seen more clearly as the glare of her fires lighted up the haggard darkness

the times. Then the gibbet, which once adorned that classic spot, travelled to St. Giles, and was there erected—the law's sole remedy for the leprosy of crime—at the east end of the old hospital's garden wall.

In time, however, Tyburn put in her claims, and it was finally removed to that favoured place, there to remain for years—a sad memento of the folly and wickedness of mankind.

And so the Wild Tribes who populated St. Giles's were deprived of much merry-making and many holidays, and grumbled exceedingly at this interference with what they had begun to consider a "vested right." They grumbled long and loudly—for rascality in tatters will at times assert its privileges as stoutly as the better-clothed rascality elsewhere—till it was graciously allowed them that all the unfortunates who travelled that road—which, beginning in ignorance, naturally ends with the gallows—should, ere they took their final plunge, be permitted to halt at the door of the ancient lazar-house, and drink a bowl of ale to the health of the good St. Giles.

A once popular Novelist, under whose hands the gibbet has blossomed into a miraculous beauty, like the Glastonbury thorn, has, with much pains, described this pleasing ceremony, investing it with all the charms which an imagination, confessing to a predilection for Highwaymen, and revelling in the annals of Newgate, is capable of bestowing upon so congenial a subject. What a picture is that he draws of the "gentle Sheppard," so dauntless and composed, the idol of a sympathising mob, whose faces, all unwashed as they are, glow with admiration, and, it is possible, with envy, as they gaze upon the hero of the hour. Reality, however, might paint another, and show the miserable ruffian of the Mint, with boasting words upon his lips, and pallid fear crouching in his heart—clutching at the bowl with hands his evil pride alone makes steady,—and as he pours the liquor down his parched throat, stilling for a moment the quaking terror which has never left him, since his eyes first rested upon his grim companion, the hangman, who, patiently waiting, sits a careless spectator by his side. His limbs quiver, and his felon heart turns to water, from the extent of an exceeding *fear; but a thousand* eyes are bent upon the "example of

the law;" they must have an example, it is true; and straining every nerve to the task, with a ruffian curse he dismisses the rising thought, and drowns remorse in the bowl of St. Giles.

With this custom, departed all we know of the hospital of St. Giles. And the felon—the neglected leper, whose leprosy is that of the mind,—cast out by a civilisation which, too often having made, disowns her offspring—is the last link which binds us to the past—carrying us back to the now forgotten lazar-house of the good queen Maude. A strange fate has attended the whole district which occupies its site. Born, so to speak, with an evil reputation, it has never been able to shake the mantle of misery from its shoulders: and, in despite of attempted improvements, it has, until lately, remained an oasis of squalid poverty and unbridled vice, amid the respectability around. At one time its wild denizens made common cause with the degraded dwellers in Alsatia, and the ruffians who peopled the sanctuaries of Westminster and the Mint, till together they presented an array of blackguardism sufficiently great to terrify and almost threaten the civilisation which hemmed them in. But the iron hand of the Puritan grappled with the many-headed monster, and would soon have strangled it, where vice should ever be strangled, in its cradle. But the reign of the exterminators was short. They passed away; a race of Titans, whose strength was used for, never against, the Heaven they worshipped,—but whose virtue, so stern and unbending, Nature shrank from, as from a thing whose icy fetters stilled the quick beating of the human heart. They passed away, and then the Restoration came, and with it the restoration of debauchery, the triumph of rascality, the saturnalia of crime. Down-trodden St. Giles took a fresh lease of life, Hydra got the better of its injuries, and, its seven heads replaced, coiled itself still closer around the abode it had chosen.

Nevertheless, about this time a feeble attempt was made to shed a lustre over the place, and invest with a sickly halo of respectability the head of our very disreputable saint. Some houses, now forming a portion of the Seven-dials, were erected, and in their tinsel splendour rendered the surrounding deformity still more hideous, as ragged embroidery

renders the more apparent the filthy squalor of the mountebank. But they had inoculated the corrupted body with a healthier matter, and the best results were expected. Soho-square, then enjoying a reputation, like most fashionable reputations, but short-lived; Covent-garden, then the resort of quality; and Bloomsbury, with its many mansions and pleasant gardens—were St. Giles's immediate neighbours. But, alas! the effort was useless; and the respectability of the quarter now known as the "Dials" shrunk like a sensitive plant from the touch of the adjacent Rookery, before whose poisonous breath it shrivelled up altogether, and —as quickly as it was born—decayed.

During the time of the Restoration, St. Giles's may be considered to have attained its zenith. Its viciousness and terrible immorality, its contempt for every law, human and divine, could only find a parallel in the precincts of the Court itself—in that Court where St. Nicholas and St. Giles might well have figured as patron saints; or, to go further back—where the deformed god of the garden alone was worshipped, and a crowned Silenus led a mad world by the ears.

In the St. Giles's of that period might be found men of every class, of almost every country, bound together by that most fragile of ties, the dreary fellowship of crime—knights of the road, cutpurses, roysterers, dicers, and ruffians of every kind, who made night hideous with discordant clamour; women, shameless in word and manner, with tongue as ready, and language as choice, as their sisters in Billingsgate, here drunk and swaggered out their evil lives —unless, indeed, fate snatched them from St. Giles's to place them in Whitehall; and the drab exchanged her place, but not her habits, when she figured side by side with the Gwynns and Clevelands of the dissipated Court.

About this time, and for many years after, St. Giles's was crowded with Frenchmen, smugglers who traded to and from the French ports, filibusters, on a small scale, bravoes of every stamp, gamesters and knaves of every class, ready for any desperate deed,—for any act of knavery and violence. Here, too, might be found French emigrants in plenty;—poor exiles, who picked up their bread—honestly when possible. They picked it up, however; and would that every *vault had as good* an excuse as theirs! French quacks in

plenty, vending strange ointments and curious compounds to such as might apply,—a class of men to whom evidently belonged the unhappy Frenchman whose name has become immortal from the persecution of that wicked wight Tom King.

Time has rolled on, but the general aspect of St. Giles's is much the same. Its population has changed, perhaps, and in size it has much decreased. The Irishman, that lazy squatter in the brick wilderness, has succeeded to the Frenchman; the highwayman has disappeared, and the guardians of the night can tread its dangerous defiles in safety; but the aspect of filthy squalor remains the same. Soho-square is a dreary ruin of a square; Covent-garden is a something better than the favoured spot of fashion; and Bloomsbury has grown dingy, and, with her faded air of quality, looks as poor and proud, as a Scottish damsel with fourteen quarterings. All around is changed—all but St. Giles's. It has outlived Alsatia and the Sanctuary, that resort of ruffianism "under a cloud," and many other plague-spots in the metropolis. It has outlived them; but alterations have and are taking place. Its knell is rung; and the time, we trust, will quickly come when we can speak of it as other than a resort of poverty and crime, the pernicious hotbed of ignorance and vice.

CHAPTER XII.

CLARE-MARKET—HAFIZ KHAN.

Clare Market! Let such of our readers who are ignorant of the locality and aspect of this favoured spot, imagine for themselves a chaos of everything that can offend the sight and smell—a congregation of shops (those of the potato-salesman, fishmonger, and butcher predominating, the butchers especially), where piles of cheap meat attract the hungry, and the hungry only—where attenuated sheep are strung up by the score, after dying, as their appearance would lead you to imagine, a miserable death by starvation. Pigs, too, in plenty find their way here; but not your obese aldermanic pigs, with unwieldly bodies and apoplectic grunt: the pigs of Clare-market are genteel-looking porkers, evi-

dently of French origin, with a greyhound like tendency to leanness, and a toughness of hide which a hippopotamus might envy. The butchers' men, too, are a peculiar race, with matted hair and greasy garments, and an unpleasant air of the shambles—a savage carelessness in their movements, as they lounge about the benches, or lean, while they sharpen their long knives, upon the stained and dirty block. Great jets of gas illuminate these shops by night, flaming and roaring far out into the thoroughfare, stretching like some fiery sword across the pavement, waving to and fro at each gust of wind, casting strange shadows about the place, and scorching with their fiery breath the face and whiskers of the curious passenger.

Clare-market, like Melrose, to be seen to advantage must must be visited by night. It is at all times crowded, but on a Saturday night it absolutely swarms with the population of the surrounding neighbourhood: each filthy alley sends forth its brood, each pestilential court pours out its rags and dirt to go tramping about in the sea of black mud; a rich compost of dead rats, sickening offal, and decaying vegetable matter, which changes its colour only where the red stream from the shops has formed into stagnant pools, offending the sight as terribly as the surrounding nastiness annoys the nostrils.

The Irish, of course, are here, as you may judge from the noise—the ceaseless clamour that reigns in the place. They lounge about, clustering together in groups of twos or threes, quarrelling, of course, while they discuss the event of the night, or latest topic of the day—to wit, how Mr. Michael Hogan bears the loss of his nose, which he had missed "somehow" in a drunken squabble; or how Mrs. Norah Creena endures the loss of her lover, who is undergoing a little compulsory retirement for having forcibly confiscated the property of Mr. Hogan, by swallowing the ornament in question—the discussion always ending in a general row, and an adjournment to the nearest station-house. Frenchmen, Italians, and Germans, are also frequenters of the market; hirsute Brutuses and fiery Cassiuses by the score—refugees, *whose terrible fierceness* consists in the shagginess of the *beard, the length of the moustache*; great orators about barricades *they never* built, pot-valiant talkers about the

battles they never fought, robbers of the hen-roost, knights of the road, who, with limbs bearing traces of the fetter, backs scarred by the whip, claim companionship with fallen greatness, and injure a good cause by asserting it their own. Refugees of another stamp are, however, to be met with in Clare-market. We will instance that man over whose worn features the gas-light is streaming as he stands cheapening a fragment of meat at the stall; it is the face of an earnest thinker—a high-souled man—of one whose name, though proscribed in the land of his birth, is written in the hearts of his countrymen, of one who, with "great possessions," fulfilled the teaching of his Maker, giving up all he had to follow Him.

Truly there are great varieties of character in Clare-market: thieves, in plenty—boys chiefly—hanging about the shops, or walking loosely along, with hands, when not engaged in the pockets of others, deep sunk in the recesses of their own. You may know them by their restless eyes, their carefully-arranged hair, and sallow soddened faces. This is written upon each brow, and they know it, feeling, in their miserable self-consciousness, that every eye which rests upon their face must see the damning mark, and read the villainy within.

Shrill-tongued women are heard on every side—shrewd economists, careful bargainers, from the broken-spirited drudge, who trembles beneath her ruffian husband's eye, to the stalwart virago, whose voluble tongue collects a jeering circle around her, and whose strong arm scatters it aside.

But what is it that has arrested our steps; that has brought us to a halt here, in the centre of Clare-market? A crowd!

Curiosity was always a failing of ours; from our childhood we sympathised with the unfortunate Fatima, and felt her case might have been our own. There is a crowd, and we determine to know what it is all about; so, after performing the somewhat needless operation of buttoning our pockets, we plunge into the mob, and force our way to its centre.

"What's the row?" demands a gentleman in a flannel jacket and paper cap, who has made a rapid progress through the crowd, principally by means of a basket which he carries on his back, from which, on one side, projects a savage-look

ing saw, toothed like a shark; and from the other an unpleasant implement, with a sharp point and an insinuating twist, like a Brobdinagian corkscrew. We shudder, as we think of Boadicea and the scythe-armed chariot with which she "cleared her way" among the Romans. "What's the row?"

"On'y a cove a selling rubub," replies the party addressed, a speculator in the children's rattle and penny-whistle line,—for toys find purchasers even in Clare-market,—whose dirty face had become mottled with indignation at the attention and patronage bestowed upon the "cove" in question.

A vender of rhubarb!—but what a vender?—a genuine Turk. Remark the artistic folds of the turban, the greasy dressing-gown, the ragged shawl which encircles the waist, the glossy beard descending in tangled masses on his breast: the—but no! it is in vain we look for perfection,—as the wind displaces for an instant the folds of the dressing-gown, we recognise the familiar aspect of corduroy; and as our eyes travel downwards, we discover that the high-lows of England have for a time displaced the slippers of Bagdad. On the tray he carries are piled up huge clay-like masses of the healthful but unsavoury drug; and to the tray is appended a paper, which, in writing that a Carstairs would have blushed to see, sets forth that "Hafiz Khan was made prisoner by the Russians; and after receiving many wounds in the trenches before Kalafat, was conveyed prisoner to St. Petersburg; and after undergoing many barbarities by the cruel order of the Emperor, succeeded in escaping to England, and is now reduced to the dreadful alternative of selling rhubarb (received direct from Turkey), in the public streets." The effect of this statement is surprising; and the ready sale of the rhubarb goes far to justify the jealousy of our friend in the penny-whistle line; the tray is emptied in no time; and with well-filled pockets the merchant prepares for departure. "Bismillah, Inshallah!" and with a stately obeisance to the assembled "infidels," Hafiz Khan walks slowly away, and we, having no longer an inducement to remain, follow his example.

Strange, we thought, as avoiding the crowded thoroughfares we turn out of the market into a by-street; strange *that in these quarters* of the very poor, where money is so

hard to gain—where it is obtained by the body's sweat, and parted with like the body's blood—that knavery should find such a ready market for its wares, and the shallowest of rooks such eager gulls! Yet it is so; and there is not a beggar in London but will tell you that it is not in the quarters inhabited by Dives that the harvest is reaped, but in those places where wretchedness is felt and known, that the false Lazarus gets ready pity, and a balm for his self-made sores.

We are thirsty, and being by no means proud, determine to halt at the nearest hostelry. Here is one, a public-house with a private look, an unpretending little affair, which takes our fancy at once; for if good wine needs no bush, neither does good ale; and here, rather than in the flaunting palaces of gin, is the healthful beverage to be found. We enter, or rather tumble into the tavern, for the floor is below the level of the street, and we are at once pitched into the interior of the establishment. "Now then, spoony, where are you coming to?" and we are somewhat rudely repelled by an individual whose body we find somewhat roughly embracing. Can it be?—Yes, it must be—it is! the beard, the turban, all proclaim the man: Hafiz Khan is before us! With one hand he holds a flagon of pewter, which our unceremonious entrance had dashed from his lips, while with the other he shakes from his beard the frothy shower which our unexpected embrace had brought down upon it.

Hafiz Khan! We look into that face again, and across its yellow surface a ripple of recognition is slowly stealing; the frown has disappeared, and a smile beams out in its place. "How d'ye do, sir? Don't know me in these togs; can't fix me no how? S'pose not. We've met afore, though, over there—t'other side of the water, in the Mint. Harry, you know, sir; the Piping Bulfinch,—three yards a penny, and all that kind o' thing?"

Know him! of course we did; the very Proteus of cadgers, whose acquaintance we had made in one of our nocturnal rambles among the Wild Tribes of London. Our offer to replenish the flagon is at once accepted; and the landlord, who has been gazing with mingled feelings of admiration and astonishment upon the Eastern costume of my friend, informs us that the parlour is empty, and quite at our dis

posal. The opportunity is too good to be lost. I beckon the rhubarb merchant to follow, and enter the cozy little room, in which a cheerful fire is blazing; the landlord places a tankard of ale before us, and I am left alone with the Piping Bulfinch.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LONDON BEGGAR—THE PIPING BULFINCH.

Our last chapter left us comfortably seated in the parlour of the Nag's Head, discussing, among other matters, a tankard of ale with the eccentric and protean Harry the Cadger, *alias* Hafiz Khan, *alias* the Piping Bulfinch, by which latter designation he is best known to his familiars.

The landlord having retired, our friend proceeds to make himself at home. Drawing a tall Windsor chair towards the one he already occupies, he deposits his legs upon its well-polished seat, so as to display the ragged fringing of his corduroys, and the graceful mud decorations of his high-lows to the best advantage; then removing his turban, he combs out, with a set of particularly dirty fingers, a forest of coarse hair; which being done to his satisfaction, he deposits the turban proudly on the table, and after diminishing the contents of the tankard by one half, addresses us as follows:

"That's not so bad a dodge, is it master?—but, like other good things, it won't last. They ses as how Fortin's a gal; if she is, she's a werry changeable one; leastways, she never sticks to my skirts for long. If she butters a crust to-day, she knocks it in the mud to-morrer; it's a reg'lar game of see-saw, ups an' downs; and more downs than ups with the Bulfinch, I can tell yer." Again he has recourse to the tankard, and his feelings subdued, continues, "It's one thing to-day, an' another the next. War's all the go now, but that's a caper as won't last. I've made a good haul to-night, there's no denying; but, bless you, if I was to persevere in *that," pointing to the turban, "I should soon get more kicks than ha'pence,—monkey's allowance—an' man's too, as times go. Now, that's a nasty drug,"* producing a lump of

suspicious-looking rhubarb from his pocket; "but war's a nastier. The people like it? Not they: it's all werry well now, but stop till the gov'ners puts the screw on 'em. War's a fever, is it? Well, taxes is a cooler, as will be precious soon diskivered, I'm a thinking. But the poor wictims don't know wot's a coming, so I shall work this dodge on and off through the spring; that's"—with a significant wink of the eye—"if summut doesn't turn up and spile it."

"Then you find the dress attract?" we inquire.

"Bless you, yes! the men is jist as big fools as the women. Dress is everythink. You dress like a Christian, an' talk like a Christian—an', cuss me, if you mayn't starve like a Christian. Mind, it's me as tells you that, an' I've worked the streets, man an' boy, for nigh thirty year. There's the Hindoo-and-trac' dodge—the Uncle Tom—the persekuted Nigger go—on'y that's 'ard to come, a'cos o' the fe'turs, an' a precious site o' dodges beside, as I should tire yer to mention. Now I s'pose"—and here his countenance assumed a reflective cast—"I s'pose the timber-toes will be a comin' in soon, an' one-armed Jacks by the dozen. Ah! that's a dodge as I can vurk to purfection. You see a sailor requires a woice; a sailor as can't sing 's no go in the streets, an' I've got a woice, as you know. Here you are!—three yards a penny!—three yards a penny!—ha!—ha!—that's the caper, ain't it, sir?"—and, proud of his gifts, the Bulfinch indulges in several snatches of popular melodies. "You see, master, folks want excitement. Charity wants a precious lot o' stirrin' up now-a-days; an' we meets 'em 'ow we can, in course. I've been thinkin' o' trying the 'spectable workman myself; it's a pretty safe caper, don't you think so?" (here he pauses, and looks towards us for an assent: we give it, though with some surprise; and are about to dilate upon so honest a determination—when)—"the get-up don't cost much," he resumes; "there's the white apron, choker, and gills to cut your ears off. Them Preston turn-outs has set the thing a' going; and Nancy—you know Nancy? Don't know her? Well, that is queer; she's promised to loan her kid, little mealy-faced Bill, as is a treasure, an' cries to melt the 'art of a churchwarden. Nancy would jine company herself, *with the babies* an' a shawl; but she's to go the Ken*cirket, with Tinkling* Tom, the tinker; an' a reg'lar jolly tir

[illegible] would [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] know a good word. [illegible] not [illegible] in [illegible] now, [illegible] sing [illegible] mistake" [illegible] "Ow [illegible] in the [illegible] the left [illegible] me and [illegible] behind her, [illegible] much about [illegible] was [illegible] he said he'd get [illegible] I can [illegible] it was only when the [illegible] she made her [illegible] of me, when she swopped me [illegible] a sovereign) an a bottle of gin with Black Jack the [illegible]. Wot did Black Jack want with me? [illegible] things; and as I wouldn't take to prigging, he [illegible] me all day long. All along, he said, of being swindled by the old 'oman. Ah! he was a beast, was Jack. He padded the country lanes—and, my eye! didn't the narvous old ladies shell out when Jack dropped the patter and took to cursin' and swearin'!"

Here the recollection proving too much for the lively Harry, [illegible] in his discourse, and laughs behind his [illegible] Turk like fashion.

[illegible] half over England with Jack, sleeping [illegible] ditch, or at some padding-ken, which [illegible]table as a ditch—sartinly not so clean! [illegible] a planning summut one night as made [illegible] wos sleeping in a out-house then; so [illegible] the farmer, then cut an' run, an' never [illegible] again."

[illegible] then?" we ask, as the face of the [illegible]ed the pewter.

"Do; why they says honesty's its own reward, but I'm blest if ever I found it so. I walked all that night an' next day, for I wos reg'larly afeard o' Jack, an' in the evenin' crept into a willage to beg. They couldn't ha' made more row at a mad dog; I was collared by the beadle, who caged me up all night, an' sent me off with a sore back and a empty stomach in the mornin'. I passed a farm-'ouse on the road, got into the hen-roost somehow, an' filled my stomach an' hat with the eggs. Now they saved my life; an' so honesty's not always the best policy,—is it, Master?"

We fight the question, regret the beadle and the cage, and beg him to continue.

"London wos my aim then. It was the place I heerd tell on at every padding-ken in our cirket; if it worn't paved with gold, I rememr'd to 'ave heerd the chaps say the people's pockets were stuffed with it; but they didn't say 'ow tight they kept 'em buttoned, I'd to find that out for myself. When I got to London, I was skeared enough: wandering about the street, and sleeping anywares by night. I tried 'ard for a honest living then, Master, but it wos no go; honesty is summut like other lux'ries, does werry vell for the rich, but is precious 'ard lines for the poor. I sees a shop, in I goes, up comes the Master. 'What do you want?' ses he.—'Work,' ses I. 'What can you do?'—'I'll try anythink,' ses I. 'Who's your mother?'—'Suffolk Jane.' 'An' your father?'—'Gipsy Bill.' 'Why, where did you come from?' ses he, looking quite skeared. 'Off the tramp,' ses I. 'Clear out,' roars he; and so I cleared out accordin'.

"The vurkus!—Oh? yes, there wos the vurkus; I got relief there sometimes; skilligallee an' 'ard words to help it down; an' so at last I made some pals, tried another line, an' soon got money in pocket."

"And the other line was—?" The piping Bulfinch removing the flagon from his lips, replaces it upon the table, places his forefinger upon the side of his nose, winks playfully, and proceedeth.

"It's no odds. When I wos upon the loose, I picked up tin; when they boxed me up, I picked up fat. Why I we *as thin as that 'ere* upon honesty," pointing to a pair of *tenuated tongs*, which rested in the corner of the fire-pla

"but the jug 's better than the vurkus anyhow; lots o' grub, an' gen'lemen to see you gets it; model prisons! blest if they arn't models, an' no mistake!"

We ventured to inquire his reason for giving up the profitable line in question, and taking to his present time-honoured calling.

"Why, look 'ere, master; arter all, it warn't a nice life neither. If a chap looked 'ard, you knew it wos at you; if you heerd some one holler, you wos sure it wos arter you; you wos afear'd of your own pals,—leastways, I wos; an' got so precious lemancholy like an' narvous, that though I wos as bold as brass afore, I got a fit of the agy each time I cotched sight of a peeler, an' wos alvays a fancying he'd got his 'and on my collar. I never liked it; but wot wos a cove to do? He couldn't starve—at all ewents, I couldn't; an' the 'spectable chaps wouldn't look at me, cos I wos so uncommon ignorant. Lots o' schools? P'raps there wos; but a empty stomach's a site more troublesome than a empty 'ead; so I filled the one, an' let t'other take its chance. I s'pose by this time I should have jined my brother in the Gover'ment appointment as he 'olds abroad, if it hadn't ha been for Blinking Charley. When he died, he left me his coal-pit accident—the paintin'; it wos a stunner;—and the wehicle. I cleared a lot o' tin by working that dodge, and became a reg'lar cadger. The stocking-loom an' distressed weaver didn't turn up bad; but I liked the wocal. Three yards a penny wos the making o' me; an' I became the Piping Bulfinch for ever."

"You like the life?"

"Well, it's a jolly one, but not wot it wos. Them wos the times when old Joe Banks kep' the crib over in the Dials, when we 'ad our club—an' why shouldn't we?"

"Why, indeed?"

"You knew the club?"

We did, and the remark of our friend has set memory at work, and while he drains the tankard we lay back "a-thinking."

In a portion of St. Giles's now pulled down existed the famous club alluded to by the lively Harry, a place where beggars of every description were to be found; where slang, *the London slang*, the most unimaginative in the world, far

inferior to the *argot* of Paris, was the language of the place; where tatters formed a livery which the rogues wore with as much pride as though it was formed of kingly purple—purple, by the way, which has hidden in its turn more disease of the heart, more wretchedness and guilt, than could be found in the breast of any beggar among them.

Here it was that miracles were nightly performed—miracles that would have paralysed the heart of charity, and turned it to stone. The lame suddenly walked, the blind began to see, legs were re-produced, arms grew by magic and filled with solid flesh the before empty sleeve, disease vanished from the cheek, sores were healed, and the glow of health sprang up, casting aside its veil of sickly chalk. A jolly set of beggars, merry as those Burns has immortalised in deathless verse!

It was a club worth the seeing. Among its members were men who had travelled as far and seen as much as any member of the Travellers'; men who were far more liberal than any at the Reform; and others as exclusive and overbearing as the magnates of the Carlton; many learned enough to qualify for the Athenæum; and others, fortunately but a few, as hopelessly imbecile as the exquisites of the Guards.

Here hypocrisy threw off its mask, and danced a merry measure to the time of the clinking silver with which an inconsiderate charity had filled its many pockets.

We have no time to pursue our reveries further; for the Piping Bulfinch, having failed by other means to make us aware of the emptiness of the tankard, has in desperation commenced with the pewter in question a system of table-rapping, which compels our immediate notice. We are upon our feet at once, and directing our friend's attention to the clock, prepare to depart. Reluctantly he replaces the flagon upon the table, and rises also. We adjourn to the bar, and, the bill settled, find ourselves again in the street. Good night! I stand upon the pavement, and watch the figure of Hafiz Khan, as, with flowing robes and "turban tall," he walks laughing away—as queer a figure as any to be seen beneath the stars this night.

by the thousand. "Yes, it's that I can't abear," says Mrs. Cosy, the housekeeper to rich old Bachelor Dozy, nearly screaming with horror and disgust. Meanwhile Master Jack, having carefully counted his gains, resolves upon treating himself to the play—not as a means of quieting conscience, but rather as a reward of merit, and a relaxation after the labours of the day.

Standing upon the stage, we look upwards, and watch with feelings of amazement and awe the descent of a vast mob upon the gallery benches, vomited through the small door near the ceiling. They come pouring down, a Niagara of human bodies, and you recoil, expecting to see them hurled by hundreds into the pit, saved by a seeming miracle. Now finding their places, there appears a mountain (not a Mont Blanc) of restless faces—a huge wall, like those of a catacomb, composed of grinning skulls. Jack is in with the first, creeping behind a Samson in fustian. As the doors are thrown open, he springs upon his shoulders, clings to them with the tenacity of the Old Man of the Sea, nor relaxes his hold till, when safely arrived, he is shaken off with a curse and a blow. Depositing a portion of his wardrobe upon the gallery rail, which rivals the stage in the quantity of fustian it presents, he, with an eye to effect, twists his braces loosely round his waist, satisfies himself that *his* purse has not been abducted in the scuffle, sticks his hat still more wickedly over the damp curl on his cheek, and gives himself up to the enjoyment of the hour.

The gallery is full; fifteen hundred people in all. Life in its every stage, from the child of a few months, to the man of eighty; babies by the score, who scream and cough, as they draw into their delicate lungs the polluted atmosphere of the crowded house,—scream and cough, till they are sat upon by the mob, or roughly shaken into silence by their mothers.

Mothers! here is one—a counterpart to the drunken drab in Hogarth's terrible Gin Lane,—who, holding her squalling child loosely on her arms, seems about to comply with the request so loudly uttered on every side, that she should "pitch it over."

Jack is now quite at home. Expresses a desire that the orchestra should "play up," and "not be long about it;"

throws an apple, with the force of a catapult, to a friend, who catches it with the skill of a juggler; and then proceeds to distribute his orange-peel with praiseworthy impartiality upon the heads of the pit.

"Horder!" "heads off!" "sit-down in front!" "silence!" and, the curtain rising, the play commences, disturbed only by the unwarrantable behaviour of a bushy-whiskered sailor, who, seated with his Dulcinea in a private box, has been recognised by a body of his comrades in another part of the house, with whom he keeps up a continuous dialogue during the remainder of the performance, interspersed with sundry threats of "speedy wallopings," to be afterwards administered to noisy objectors in pit and gallery.

The "bill of the play" promises well. Jack cannot read it (education of that sort having been denied him), but he has ears, and listens eagerly to a black-muzzled scholar who is spelling it through by his side. Ah! the title, at least, is full of promise; and the eyes of the Wild Tribes sparkle with delight, as it is bandied about from one to the other.

"*Gentleman George; or, the Highwayman's Bride,*"

is the title of the piece. Gentleman George is a large man, with a powdered head, and a laced coat; and, but for his heavy Jack-boots, might be taken for a model footman. He has a hoarse voice, a swaggering gait, and a pair of portentous pistols, and shows his pretensions to gentlemanly character by swearing fierce oaths, threatening everybody's life, and vapouring about "quick triggers," and his "black meer"—a seedy-looking horse, with a funereal look,—an animal of which only a Shillibeer would desire to become the owner.

Jack's eyes sparkle, and, with loud lungs, he applauds every evil sentence the gentlemanly George utters. And great is the delight of the audience, when that distinguished individual is pardoned at the very foot of the gallows ("the triple tree," as he loves to call it), and receives as a reward for his gallant exploits—which include a murder, two burglaries, and various other trifles—the hand of Lord Somebody's daughter.

Who shall say that little Jack is incapable of education. Look at him now,—with every perverted faculty awake

drinking in, with eyes and ears, the evil lesson the play conveys. Look at him, and ponder well, with such teaching, what the inevitable result must be.

The under-plot to the play is of a more domestic kind. The heroine is a persecuted housemaid, who wanders about her mistress's house—where her place seems something of a sinecure—in a loose garment of white muslin, with her hair flowing gracefully down her back. She is constantly flying into passions with her employers, whom she alternately threatens with a broom (her constant companion), or menaces with the vengeance of "one above"—alluding, we should imagine from the direction of her finger, to some mysterious lodger in another part of the house. She is, however, eventually placed in the hands of justice, on suspicion of having purloined a five-pound note (at which, strangely enough, the gentlemen in the gallery are highly indignant). Everything, however, comes right in the end; and the Lord Somebody, before mentioned, claims his daughter,—who having been partially smothered in her infancy by a fiend of a nurse, was rescued by Black Jem, a sweep (and comic man of the piece), from the dustbin, where that unprincipled female had conveyed her. She is ultimately married to the gentlemanly highwayman in question,—a catastrophe kindly prophesied by a very obtrusive old woman in a red cloak, who has been continually appearing and disappearing, stirring up discord with a stunted clothes-prop throughout every act of the piece. Gentlemanly George promises his bride to reform his life, and "give up the road," which he proceeds to eulogise in a song which is rapturously "hangcored" by boxes, pit, and gallery.

Let us look around, and judge the effect of all this upon the house. Here now is a man remarkable as a distinguished professor of the "garotte,"—who is giving a peculiar cloudy aspect to his before dirty countenance by rubbing it with the sleeve of his coat, and is weeping genuine tears at the misfortunes of the gauzy girl upon the stage. As for little Jack, his indignation at her persecutor is a something to witness. He echoes every claptrap in praise of honesty, and jumps about so violently on his seat when his natural enemies, the *olice, arrest her for the* robbery, that he nearly jumps the *gentleman's purse* from his pocket!

Shall pit and gallery exclusively occupy our attention? We will glance at another part of the house. Ah! our old friend, Mordecai, the bill-discounter, and his gorgeous wife, with necklace of diamonds and dress rustling like bank notes. Shortweight, the tallyman, is here, too, with a face as hard as his gripe upon the pockets of the poor. Near him is Jigger, the rich publican—the magician, whose evil spirits destroy the body and degrade the soul. Lynx, the attorney (not unknown to the Wild Tribes), occupies the proscenium box, accompanied by his son—a foxy-headed exquisite in blue tie, buff waistcoat, and white gloves. Opposite to them is seated a woman, with many rings upon her fat fingers, heavy earrings dropping upon her shoulders—for neck she has none. There is rouge upon her cheeks, and a nauseating smile upon her lips: she is a trader of the worst description, and owns much house property in the neighbourhood. Ha! ha! my very sensitive friends; all the villainy in the world is not confined to the WILD TRIBES OF LONDON.

The Pantomime! Catcalls, shouts, screaming, laughter, the entire chaos of noise suddenly ceases, and the hushed multitude watch eagerly the curtain as, after trembling violently, it slowly ascends, and— But we will not trouble our readers with an account of a pantomime; abler pens than ours have performed that task. It is not for us to introduce them to the "toothless fairy" from the Realms of Love—to the ethereal Columbine, with elephantine feet and coarse, red hands—to those wondrous beauties of the ballet, those sylphs, with wings of gauze and coronets of tin (one of whom, though he knows it not, served Little Jack but a few hours ago with with the herring now snugly reposing in his hat)—to the agile Harlequin, the hoarse-voiced Clown, the sad old Pantaloon, whose position in life is so hard to contemplate and sad to see—to those grim-visaged demons, from whose aspect Jack must have taken his only idea of a soul's tormentor—that is, if he ever thought about such a personage at all, which, to say the least, is doubtful. All this is old—old as the Pantomime itself—old as the jokes it contains—old as its miserable author, the theatre fag, whose pale face peers from the wings, a face upon which hopeless *poverty has left* many a painful trace—old, old as the *prejudice which keeps* such nonsense on the stage.

However, Little Jack is unbounded in his approbation. What pen can depict his welcome to the Clown!—what words describe his shout for "Hot Codlins!"—though, be it understood, in the enjoyment of the Pantomime, the play is not forgotten, and the Highwayman on his "black meer" rides triumphant over all. How every fresh act of robbery or brutality, on the part of the Clown, is hailed with roars of delight by an appreciating audience; and—terrible is the sound to our mind!—amid the general mirth comes rippling the silvery laugh of childhood. Terrible, too, is it to notice how, with a precocity strange in one so young, little thieving Jack catches the points of each coarse joke—and, carried away by the discomfiture of the police, almost proves false to the memory of Gentleman George, by wishing to be a Clown, that he, too, might rejoice in the impunity of thieving.

The pantomime is over, and, like the rushing of some mighty torrent, the gallery pours its hundreds into the street. The exploits of Gentleman George are upon every tongue; the lessons they have taught, in every heart. "Should such things be?" The Lord Chamberlain is, doubtless, a worthy man; but we vouch for nothing. The Licenser of Plays may be a "second Daniel" in his judgments; but when the voice which pronounces a veto upon many a noble effort of the scholar's pen, and yet permits such wickedness and folly to be nightly represented in places such as these, it is time a movement be made somewhere; and those who, whether from idleness or incapacity, are false to the duties of their office, should at once be cast aside, or at least be placed in one whose duties they are more willing or better able to fulfil.

Little Jack is one of the last to quit the theatre; but, as he bounds into the street, a firm hand is laid upon his collar, and he sinks, kicking and howling to the pavement. He recognises his Nemesis at a glance. A policeman has him fast enough; and the purse lies heavy—heavier than lead in his pocket. Again he writhes and kicks, when a thought of Gentleman George darts like lightning across that dark and troubled mind. He stands erect at once—the teaching has not been thrown away—and, with the step of a hero, little thieving Jack paces proudly away by the side of his *iptor.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD MINT IN THE BOROUGH.

By appointment, we have met our "official friend" near St. George's Church, in the Borough of Southwark.

"Are you ready?" Quite. "Follow me;" and a dozen steps take us across the road, and we are at the entrance of a narrow street that opens on the main thoroughfare. We pass down it; and then our friend halts for a moment to bid us, as strangers, welcome to the Old Mint, in the Borough of Southwark!

Is it possible? but a few steps from a great thoroughfare, such as that we have left, glittering with shops, crowded by traffic, blazing with gas; and we come upon a place like this! We seem to have left civilisation behind us, to have parted from the quick current of life and entered upon its stagnant waters—waters by which Ignorance sits and bathes her offspring—waters in which Misery wallows, and with hands and feet fettered by "red tape," and borne down by weight of parchment deeds, "ancient grants," and "vested rights," struggles no longer, but gazes helplessly, almost hopelessly, towards the banks—waters were Vice alone feels itself at home, for the life it receives in its putrid depths is fed and nourished by the foulness they contain—a stagnant sea, which statesmen with stagnant minds refuse to stir, but, with nose daintily held between thumb and finger, sometimes inspect, not to remedy, but to wonder at the strange fecundity of the evil soil its slimy arms embrace.

Dilapidated looking buildings surround us on all sides; there is an air of mournful desolation about everything—the saddening touch of misery has passed over all. Houses in every stage of decay, lean forwards, backwards, sideways—standing every way but upright, and seem slowly crumbling to the ground. Here is one—once a fine old mansion, but now it squats like a drunken giant by the wayside, and with nodding head and evil scowl, bends over the passengers below. Here is another, shored up on all sides by huge

of a truculent-looking individual, who acts as a kind of house-dog to the establishment, and guardian of its gloomy gate. However, in this, as in many other cases, appearances are deceitful; the gentleman in question being an honest and trusted servant of the lodging-house proprietor, who looks upon him as anything but an unnecessary appendage to his household.

The room, which is a small one, is littered on all sides with various descriptions of "property," belonging to lodgers who, being of a suspicious nature, and more than doubtful of their companions' honesty, have placed them in the porter's charge, having an implicit belief in the honour of the "house." There are, however, several articles of wearing apparel, which, hanging against the dirty walls, more particularly demand our attention. They have evidently been there for some time, by the thick layers of dust that encrust their surface. We approach to examine them closer; and the porter, noticing our look of inquiry, condescends to expiain.

"Them's pledges;" ah, we see—articles left by many a houseless wanderer, who, seeking a shelter for the night, has parted with what, in his bitter poverty, he has since been unable to redeem. "Exactly so;" Orson nods assent, and, unlocking the flood-gates of his speech, proceeds to give us some information of the wearers.

That boy's cap, for instance, Orson explains, but a short time ago surmounted the long, greasy hair and Newgate-knocker curls of Cautious Jemmy. But Jemmy's caution seems to have failed him for once; for not only has he lost his cap to the "Farm House" porter, but his curls too have been shorn away by the merciless shears of the prison barber, and there is much weeping and lamentation among the damsels of the Mint.

This much-worn coat of velveteen, with a few large white buttons still clinging to it, faithful to the last, like old retainers to a ruined house, once surmounted the stalwart person of Bristol Bill, whose name was long a terror in this peaceful locality. He was, it seems, prevented from redeeming his *pledge by a grateful* Government presenting him with an *appointment to a distant* colony—for "cracking a drum, with *wiolence," as Orson* kindly informs us—which, being freely

translated, runs thus: that Mr. Bristol Bill having, at an advanced hour of the night, made an unceremonious entry into a gentleman's house, had warmly resented the inhospitable behaviour of its owner, who had refused to consider it in any other light than as an unwarrantable intrusion.

"Them's left by the Hirish reapers," pointing to an iron pot, a felt hat, two torn handkerchiefs, a ragged blue waistcoat, a tin tobacco-box, and a few dingy cap-borders (poor Norah having parted with her finery to give the "childer'" a night's rest).

"That," directing our attention to a little model of a stocking-loom, "that's Drunken Jerry's, who's in the house now. He's a distressed weaver, yer know, and would have made a fortin' long ago, if it wasn't for the gin."

"And this?" we ask, taking up a coarsely-turned wooden leg, that was quietly reposing against the wall of the apartment.

"That's Idle Tom's; he's out to-night a-looking for tin, 'coss he wants his leg, and can't get on noways without it."

We quite imagine his difficulty; but, upon mentioning the inconvenience, not to say impossibility, of a man's progressing upon one leg in the streets of London, Orson breaks out into a grim laugh. "One leg? Vy, there's the on'y leg as ever Tom lost. He works the Spanish soger dodge, an', o' course, he can't get on without it; but, as for legs," —with a critical glance downwards,—"vy, his pins are as right as your'n."

Apologising for our ignorance, we return Idle Tom's stock-in-trade to its former resting-place; and in so doing, our eyes fall upon a battered bonnet and tattered shawl, suspended from one of the many pegs projecting from the walls. There is a jaunty something about the bonnet, all bent and worn as it is—certain remains of past gentility about the shawl, despite its tatters—that at once leads to inquiry, and an answer is quickly forthcoming.

A girl had applied at the "Farm House" for a lodging —"a pale-faced, genteelish kind o' gal," as the porter describes her—who, houseless, and, as appears, friendless, had yielded up bonnet and shawl into those grasping hands for a *night's shelter*, as a security for future payment. "Well, *in the morning*," the man goes on to state, "I'd scare

opened the door, when she comes a-rushing down stairs with a face as white as chalk, never stops to say bad or good to me, but bolts straight out into the street. Afore I could get to the door she was off, an' I see her turning the corner like mad. Poor gal "—here the porter pauses for a moment, then with a shrug, whose dreadful meaning makes us shudder, he continues—"Ourn is a roughish lot up stairs, and, yer see, a gal like that 'ere hadn't no call to be in a lodgin' 'ouse in the Mint." We turn to the proprietor, who, standing at our elbow, has been listening to his servitor's narration, and inquire if he knew what became of her. "Well, he really can't say, is not quite sure, but"—here he sinks his voice to a whisper—"there was a 'found drowned' in the papers the next morning, and it may be"—enough, we understand; it is a fitting conclusion to such a tale. The lodging-house keeper shakes his head sorrowfully, while our "official friend," who is lounging in the doorway, gives utterance to a plaintive whistle.

As we gaze upon these tattered remnants—these frail mementos of the poor girl, whose appearance has even touched grim Orson's heart, savage as he looks, and whose "pale, skeared face" he "al'ays shall remember"—a mist falls upon our sight, and our eyes are blinded as with rain. A sad history unfolds itself before us—the history of the aching head that that shabby bonnet had so lately covered, the story of the poor neglected heart that once beat beneath the folds of yon tattered shawl; all is plain enough to us now. The story is old as the hills, yet may still be worth the telling.

Far away from the filthy purlieus of the Mint, in a small cottage where dirt and squalor are as things unknown, a gray-haired woman is bending over a letter, carefully preserved, though the paper is blotted, and the writing blurred by many bitter tears—the tears of a mother weeping for her child, a lost one—and those drops must indeed be bitter that can defy the hand of Time to assuage.

Far away from the filthy purlieus of the Mint, in a room furnished with elegance, and near a table laden with luxury, two persons are seated, a man and a girl. The man gazes *lovingly on the girl,* the girl trustingly on the man; he *stoops to arrange the* rich luxuriance of her hair, and, trifling

with her ringlets, whispers many a soft nothing in her willing ear. A few months, and again the scene has changed; there is still the tempter and his victim, but the man is cold and indifferent—the toy has ceased to please, and the girl looks doubtfully upon that moody brow. Still leaning on that broken reed, still clinging to that fragile hope—a belief in the constancy of an unlawful love—she dresses her face in smiles; but now thoughts of that gray-haired woman, weeping alone, come crowding thickly upon her, and "her remembered home gnaws like a viper at her secret heart."

Again we change the scene. A man is riding slowly down a narrow street, lost in thought; his head is bent upon his breast, and the reins hang loosely on his horse's neck, while a well-appointed groom hovers respectfully in the rear. A shrill cry breaks, as it were, from beneath the very feet of the horse, and the master, starting from his reverie, reins him up in time: another step, and his hoofs would have crushed the life out of that emaciated girl, who, returning from her work, was slowly crossing the road.

"A narrow escape!" mutters the man, as he turns

look at the girl, who has regained the pavement. Their glances meet; the girl staggers wildly forward a few steps, to fall heavily in the road. The man, with a cheek white as ashes, rides swiftly away, followed by the well-appointed groom, who—an undeniable mark of his owner's respectability—hovers respectfully in the rear.

A crowded work-room, and a girl is bending over a marriage-robe; her fingers ply the needle busily, though her eyes are overflowing with tears. Her companions show but slight astonishment, for smiles alone are rarely to be met with there; while the task-mistress, glancing angrily at the tear-stains on the dress, shrilly admonishes her shrinking slave for such ill-timed grief. A wedding-dress, stitched by the hand that should itself have worn the wedding-ring. Yes, a dress stained with drops, my lady bride, fallen from eyes whose glance would pale your bridegroom's cheek, and shake his heart with worse than a dastard's fear.

The dress completed, the bride complains, and the girl is *discharged. From* the terrible slavery of the West-end *work-room, the girl* sinks lower still, and becomes the

"helot" of the East-end slop-seller. But misfortune tracks her footsteps; maddened by misery, some fraction of her work is pawned, and—for the Jew is merciful—the girl is again discharged.

It is night; and thrust from the miserable garret she called her home, she paces the London streets. Twice has she passed over that river into whose waters she has hitherto—for reasons the wretched alone can know — dared scarcely to glance. But this night there is a strange fascination in the spot; and seated on the bridge, for hours she has gazed down upon the dark water, so tranquilly flowing, and which seems to invite the poor shattered heart to rest. But the memory of that gray-haired woman, weeping alone, is now strong upon her; and hastily rising, she hurries madly away. Walking many a dreary street, where all is desolate as herself, she pauses at last, and foot-sore and weary, demands of a policeman where she may get a lodging for the night; for the night only, for to-morrow she will be *far away, asking* forgiveness where pardon has long since *been granted.*

The man, scarcely regarding his questioner, points to dim light from the window of the Farm-house, and—the is known.

May the "pale, skeared face" be a lasting remembra in another mind than rough Orson's, of the Porter's Lodg and may another sight be ever present in a bad man's dream,- a figure rigid in death, lying low down in the river's mud depths; the face white as marble, and placid as a saint' turned upwards to the sky, there asking for fairer judgmen and kinder treatment than has hitherto been vouchsafed t the unhappy outcast upon earth.

A marble monument, in a noble church, commemorates the virtues of a most promising young man, whose parliamentary career was brought to an early close by a fall from his horse while hunting.

There is also another grave, in an old village church-yard, that boasts no monument at all;—a little mound of earth, upon which kind hands have scattered seeds, which have blossomed into flowers; beneath which a gray-haired woman is peacefully sleeping; for long ere this she has regained the treasure she has lost, and the mother has embraced her child.

Where shall we seek for a momento of the poor wanderer in the London streets? Here, among the Wild Tribes of London; a tattered bonnet and a tattered shawl—in the Porter's Lodge, in the old Farm-house, in the venerable Borough of Southwark.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RED HOUSE IN MINT-SQUARE.

Turning our backs upon the "Old Farm House," we find ourselves once more in Mint-street. Here our guide pauses before a tavern-door, and invites us to enter. We do so; and witness a scene which, having partially described in a former paper, we shall not dwell upon now. Suffice it to state, that a tavern such as this may be met with almost every type of the inhabitants of the Mint. Thieves in plenty, from the *veteran burglar to the* boy-thief, who, with his cat-like tread *and shrinking eyes,* seems to crawl through life—

the bitter knowledge of his own miserable degradation. Costermongers also abound; huge, swaggering fellows, clad in weather-stained velveteens, with carefully twisted love-locks, and showy "kingsmen" twined round their brawny necks. Beggars, too, may be found here in shoals—beggars, such as Callot loved to sketch—beggars, that Charles Lamb should have seen, ere he wept over their decline in the metropolis. Here they meet to talk over the "day's work;" and, with coarse oath and loose jest, comment upon the last "new dodge," and its success.

Would that the Charity so indiscriminate in its bounty—so "liberal in its aid to clamorous importunity in rags"—could visit a place like this; where the mendicant, whose misery is "a trade," the invalid, who thrives upon his self-made sores, may here be seen "at home," scattering with lavish hand the proceeds of the day. Could Charity see this, she would doubtless reflect, before she "crossed with silver" the beggar's out-stretched palm, that all misery in the world is not garmented in rags; that there are thousands whom "famine cannot reconcile to filth;" that—but, alas! Charity will not go out of her road to see—her kind heart shudders at rags; and so she tosses alms into the stalwart beggar's crownless hat, while silent misery crawls voiceless by. In a world of indifference like this, is it a wonder if Autolycus should thrive?

But, to return to the lodging-houses of the Mint. Our friend has entered the tavern to "make arrangements:" they are quickly made, and he beckons us to follow—whither? To the "Red House," in Mint-square.

The "Red House" is not a prepossessing-looking building by night; but to our minds it has a far more sinister-looking aspect when viewed by day, every portion of its woodwork on the outside being painted of a dingy red, which gives to the dismal-looking house a sanguinary complexion by no means pleasant to look upon. But, as our business is with it by night, we follow our conductor into its kitchen; and, under the imposing shadow of his presence, survey the curious assemblage it contains.

"These are nearly all thieves," our friend remarks, taking *in the entire company* with a comprehensive glance, and re*commending them* to our notice with an equally comprehensi

wave of the hand; "and those that are not thieves, get their living 'somehow' in the London streets—like Jack Straw, there," pointing to a square-built, evil-looking fellow, with a whole cataract of matted hair tumbling over his eyes. "He gets a living as a chair-mender; but—" and here the shoulders are shrugged with much significance—"I'm afraid he an't much better than the others."

"And that pretty-looking woman, who, a miracle of cleanliness amid the filth around, is seated near the gentleman you describe?"

"His wife."

"His what?"

Another eloquent shrug from our friend, and we turn to examine the chair-mender again and again. Lavater himself could not discover one redeeming point in that ill-looking phsiognomy—"unseemly man to please fair lady's eye." Yet, who shall "know the bent of woman's fantasy?"

"This is a literary man," laying his hand upon the shoulder of a pale slim young fellow, ragged and miserable enough to make out his claim to the title even when Grub-street had an existence, and literature stood upon a different footing than now. He has an eye, however, full of expression, though with an unpleasant glitter that reminds you of a snake's. He wears a thin coating of hair on his upper lip, and a thick coating of dirt over the entire face. He looks up at the touch of our friend's hand, and nods a recognition. "Has he been reading much lately?" "Not much," with a nonchalant air; "few things worth reading now." Ah! the snake-like glitter of the eye is explained; our new acquaintance is a critic.

Taking a seat by his side, we endeavour to draw him out, and experience but slight difficulty in doing so. He is evidently flattered by our attention, and rattles on somewhat as follows: "I'm doing little enough in the literary world now, Sir; can't rise higher than the *London Journal*. By-the-by, don't you think, Sir, the *Town Tattler* has been very flat lately? As for the *Thunderer*, he goes round to all points of the compass, as usual. Ah! there's nothing like good writing *now-a-days, Sir*; as when Fonblanque did the *Examiner*. *What did you say,* Sir." We say nothing, and our strange *ompanion continues*: "Seen the newspaper, Sir? the Typo?

They say Benjamin Backbite writes for it. Lots o' tin, Sir! They're going to buy up all the wits on town, Sir;—to chaff the Ministers out of office, I suppose. Hot an' strong 'gainst old Pam—that's the sort! Any price paid; might get something to do there myself, Sir, but I don't like the party." Speechless with astonishment, we sit, "content to listen," while our friend pours out the river of his discourse, till we are reminded that the deputy is willing to show the "upstairs," when shaking this literary phenomenon deferentially by the hand, we rise from our seat, and though loath, depart.

Up-stairs;—sleeping-rooms like those described in the Farm-house, but not so clean; the smell bad, the apartments close and stifling; the beds, now thickly tenanted, are miserable-looking enough, and the coverings as dirty and unwashed as the faces which protrude from them. We shake our heads; had hoped better things. From the beds we turn our attention to the sleepers. A strange variety! In a bed on our right a boy is sleeping, or rather was sleeping; for he wakes with a start on our approach, and glances sharply and doubtfully upon us. The forehead is low and retreating; the eyes, deep set beneath the brows, are twinkling with cunning, like a rat's. We recognise at once the product of a seed thrown, uncared for, in the streets—to live or die, as the chance may be; a weed, nourished into quick and evil growth amidst the squalor and crime of London.

As we turn away, our eye falls upon another face—that of a man, who, awakened from an uneasy slumber, turns round to scowl upon us. Ah! the same face as the boy's; the same forehead, the same eye,—though the former has many a wrinkle, and the latter glows like a live coal with the unbridled passions within.

Is this the beginning and the end? No; for the boy's beginning we must go some twelve years back—dive into some cellar, where, amid dirt and squalor, he was born; where, amid drunkenness, dirt, debauchery, and crime, he was bred—drinking in disease from the polluted air—drinking in pollution still worse when pillowed on the bosom of the drunken drab, his mother. From his cradle, he has known *nothing but crime*; with the first words he could lisp, he has *been taught to beg*; with the hands he could scarcely move *he has been taught* to steal. And so the infant has ripe[illegible]

the boy, and he in turn will grow, with that unwholesome rapidity which only weeds possess, into this heavy, scowling man.

So much for the beginning; can you paint the end? We will try. The scene is Newgate; a man heavily ironed is seated in a cell; before him, another man, with mild kind voice, and eyes crowded with benevolence. He holds a book in his hand, and is reading, slowly and impressively; but the words, all gentle as they are, fall upon a heart hardened, a mind depraved—and the teaching of a life cannot be undone in an hour. The soil that once might have received these seeds has now become utterly, irredeemably barren—shut out from even a glimpse of that light which *now*, they tell him, is so necessary for his salvation—now, when the strong man, in the prime of life, in the vigour of health, has but a few hours to live. The chaplain continues to read; but the felon rattles his irons impatiently, and motions him to close the book: the hours are flying fast, and he can think only of the—hangman!

And this is the end? What other would you have? He must be a Hercules indeed, who, neglected in his cradle, can strangle the serpents who claim him for their own—the serpents we call Ignorance and Crime: with such a beginning the end is sure. We pass to another bed, also tenanted by two little children—infants with light curling hair, their eyes closed in a dreamless slumber, and their little arms twined around each other's necks. "Them's twins," says the lodging-house keeper's deputy. "They are show children," adds our friend—"children let out for begging on the streets." Their mother, we learn, is in the kitchen below, and now, having put her children to bed, as a "stock in trade" too valuable to neglect, is spending the receipts of the day with her consort, a travelling tinker, who confesses to but three weaknesses—tobacco, cards, and gin.

Before we descend, we look out from the window upon the forest of chimney-pots—out upon the maze of tumble-down smoke-blackened old houses, that stand in melancholy confusion around. The moon looks down upon the scene sullenly enough as she struggles from behind the masses of sombre *clouds that glide* slowly along the sky; the wind howls dismally, *shaking the* rotting casements, and turning the rusty *owls of the chimneys* with a hoarse screaming noise. One

building, however, towers above the chaos; plainly, but strongly built, there is, as the moonlight falls upon it, an air of strength and comfort in its aspect that contrasts strangely with the terrible misery and poverty around. We look towards our friend for an explanation; he moves to the window, and, "Oh! the workhouse!" he says, and we slowly and sorrowfully descend.

From this lodging-house we proceed to another and another; not even Dublin Peter's, despite his remonstrances, is excepted. We can now understand Dublin Peter's modest reserve, when we view the filthy sty he inhabits, where fever nestles always, and crime seeks a refuge in the night; it is a type of many lodging-houses even now to be found in the Mint, despite the vigilance and ever praiseworthy endeavours of such men as Sir Richard Mayne and Captain Hay—an endeavour which has done much, and will do more, to bring about a better state of things in the homes and haunts of the Wild Tribes of London.

But to return to the lodging-houses of which we speak: the dark and broken stairs—the small staircase covered with filth—the suffocating stench—the wretched kitchen, crammed with wretches of every stamp—the large fires, whose sultry breath seems to pervade the house—the beds, despite the most active surveillance, crowded with more than the legal number; as for instance,—"Hilloh, how is this!" and our friend halts before a squalid bed, in a corner of a filthy room; "you've got more than your quantity here."—"Oh, thin, Sir," whines out one of its tenants, a little monkey-faced Irishman, "but it's on'y meself an' me three childer," making at the same time many fruitless endeavours to cover three bushy-headed, blackbearded fellows, with the rag of a quilt to them allotted, amidst a roar of laughter from the other occupants of the room. "Arrah, thin it's from the raping we are," comes from another well-packed couch, that seems absolutely to bristle with heads, and some half-a-dozen pair of eyes look imploringly in our face.

These, it will be said, are rare exceptions to a general rule. They are not so; but granted that they are, still places such as *these call for* further remedy; and surely at a time when *our sanatory* Solons have awakened from their long, long *sleep—when* the presence of Pestilence is about us as we w

—the wedge already introduced should be driven home, and the filthy lodging-houses of the Mint, with many another deadly abuse, be numbered with the things that were.

As we pass through the labyrinth of streets that form the district known as the Mint, our friend points out many an object of interest as a remnant of the past. This blackened, miserably-looking tenement, which every blast of wind seems to threaten with destruction, as it tears through and through the desolate old house, was once inhabited by the most incorrigible of scoundrels, the worthy John Sheppard, around whose bullet-head a modern novelist has twined the laurel wreath which will never decorate his own. Near to this old house is one still older, "The Duke's Head," stated in the annals of the Mint to have stood there for nearly 300 years, and in whose parlour the great Mr. Sheppard himself is said to have unbent himself. Here, too, is the "Black Bull," a quaint little tavern of much renown, and to which many a strange history is attached; and in which Mr Abershaw, a hero of the same stamp, but who has not yet found a biographer to render his name immortal, was wont to disport with his cronies. As we proceed up the street, we come upon a woman, laughing, singing, and talking loudly to herself. "She seems happy enough," we remark, with a laugh. "Poor devil," is the curt reply; "I transported two of her sons last year, and she has been a drunken maniac ever since." So saying he turns the corner sharply, and we breathe more freely as we turn our backs upon the Purlieus of the Mint.

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